

Chairman Raúl Grijalva
House Committee on Natural Resources
Full Committee Hearing on Climate Change
February 6, 2019

The Committee on Natural Resources will now come to order.

The Committee is meeting today to hear testimony on the impacts of climate change and the need for Congress and the administration to act.

Under Committee Rule 4(f), any oral opening statements at hearings are limited to the Chairman and the Ranking Minority Member.

Welcome everyone to the first hearing of the 116th Congress for the Natural Resources Committee and thank you to our witnesses for appearing before us as we begin to tackle one of the most urgent and pressing challenges of our time.

The majority of Americans consider meaningful action on climate change a moral imperative. They're absolutely right. And they have friends on this Committee, including the chairman, who are here to work on solutions.

Climate change is real. The emissions we produce from burning fossil fuels are making it worse. It's a threat to our public health, national security, infrastructure, and natural resources. We are seeing its impacts now, and they will only grow stronger unless we change course.

Our communities are paying the price for years of inaction on this issue. The massive and unprecedented storms, heat waves, fires, and droughts we are experiencing are not normal. They are being made worse by climate change, and if we don't take action now, we're only at the beginning.

The last four years have been the four hottest years ever recorded. Ice sheets are melting far faster than previously thought. The coast of Alaska is literally disappearing into the ocean. Indigenous villages are already having to relocate.

We will see more climate refugees as time goes on. Parts of our planet where people currently live may very well become uninhabitable.

Every day we fail to act increases the costs of addressing this crisis for future generations. Putting our heads in the sand puts peoples' lives at risk and our nation's safety in jeopardy.

Today we turn the page on this Committee from climate denial to climate action. The Democratic majority is here to listen to the people. To work for the people. To hear from Americans across the country, from all walks of life, whose experiences emphasize the need to address this crisis.

The rest of the world understands the urgent need to take action on climate change. The Trump administration chooses to mock science and mislead the public about what our country will look like if we do nothing.

President Trump seeks to expand fossil fuel production on public lands, roll back protections for clean air and clean water, suppress the role of science, and turn his back on international agreements.

That's why states, local community leaders, businesses and many others are stepping up. They can't wait for action from an administration that doesn't care about their well-being.

There is a great opportunity for American entrepreneurs to lead the way in creating and deploying new energy technologies the world will need. But with people's lives in imminent danger, we know that we need more than innovation. We need good policies.

Climate change is a matter of social justice. Communities of color and tribes are disproportionately impacted by climate change and will continue to struggle unless we take action.

Along with testimony from our witnesses today, I invite the public to provide their climate crisis stories at naturalresources.house.gov. I'd like to briefly share just one of the many stories we've already heard from the public. This is from a woman named Katie Davis who wrote to us from Goleta, California: "Last July on a freakishly hot night that broke records across southern California, a fire suddenly broke out in our neighborhood due to hot winds, the likes of which I've never felt before, that pushed flames toward us rapidly. It was one of the most terrifying moments of my life. We ran out of the house with nothing, and no time to prepare, and fled. Our house survived with minor damage, but that anguishing night most of the houses on our street burned down. I look out at the foundations of five burned out houses as I write this."

These are the stories we need to hear in this Committee and in this Congress. The best policies are informed by a combination of sound science and informed public input. Those are the guideposts for this committee, both in our hearing today and in everything we do for the next two years. Climate change is an urgent problem. It demands urgent action and a sense of purpose from Congress. This Committee will offer both.

Thank you again to the witnesses. I look forward to your testimony.

I now recognize Ranking Member Bishop for his opening statement.