

Chairman Alan S. Lowenthal

Energy and Mineral Resources Subcommittee Legislative Hearing:

The Case for Climate Optimism: Realistic Pathways to Net Zero

October 17, 2019

The Subcommittee on Energy and Mineral Resources will come to order.

The Subcommittee is meeting today to hear testimony on realistic pathways to address the climate crisis.

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

I ask unanimous consent that all other Members' opening statements be made part of the hearing record if they are submitted to the Subcommittee Clerk by 5:00 pm today. *[pause]* Hearing no objection, so ordered.

Over the past several weeks we have seen an extraordinary level of activism from young people across the United States and around the world urging decision-makers to follow the science and take bold action on climate change.

Their message was impossible to miss. The science is overwhelmingly clear that the planet and our society are facing irreparable harm if we don't take strong action soon to reduce greenhouse gas pollution.

According to the United Nations' Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, the world's foremost group of climate scientists, we must achieve net zero emissions globally by midcentury at the latest to avoid the worst potential impacts of climate change.

It's important to note that's net-zero, not absolute zero. In other words, this is a two-front war, and while we need to fight both simultaneously, more success in one eases the pressure on the other.

First, we must reduce greenhouse gas pollution dramatically. More renewables, higher efficiency, better energy storage, less methane leakage, a smarter grid – those are some of our challenge on one front.

But we also have to take more carbon out of the atmosphere. The good news is nature already helps us out here: in 2014, U.S. forests and soils absorbed 762

million metric tons of carbon dioxide. The bad news is that we emitted nine times more than that. Better land management, forest protection, and new carbon-removing technologies can help us on this front.

If achieving net zero sounds like a difficult goal, that's because it is. The number of cars on the road, our heavy industries, our building stock, I could go on and on, all of these realities of modern life make this a monumentally challenging task.

But it is not impossible.

Achieving net zero will take a massive mobilization and coordination across many different levels of government and the private sector, but why should a challenge of this magnitude stop us now?

We are a nation that mobilized against the threat of fascism and won the second world war.

We put astronauts on the moon and successfully brought them home.

When we learned of the destructive effects of acid rain on our landscapes, Congress amended the Clean Air Act and we cut sulfur dioxide emissions by 88 percent.

When we learned that chlorofluorocarbons were dissolving the ozone layer, we came together with every single country in the U-N to ratify the Montreal Protocol, phasing out those chemicals and beginning to heal the ozone hole.

This is not the time to lose hope in the ability of the American people to lead the world in addressing humanity's biggest challenges.

Testimony from today's witnesses will provide a snapshot of policies that can help guide and inspire our own efforts on this committee to help the federal government, and specifically the Department of the Interior, reach net zero emissions on a science-based, realistic timeline.

Before turning to Ranking Member Gosar for his opening statement, I would like to reiterate something I said at the start of the year. I want this subcommittee to be a forum where we discuss the issues and develop legislative solutions that have the buy-in from communities across the country.

We all come from different districts representing different constituencies with different ideas about the best ways to move our country forward. There is no silver

bullet policy that will save the day. Meeting the immense challenges ahead will require as many solutions as possible on the table. This isn't going to happen overnight, but it's up to us to come up with thoughtful solutions that meet our climate goals while also preserving the wellbeing of our constituents. I hope that today's hearing leads to a thoughtful and respectful discussion, based on facts, and with an eye towards finding agreement whenever possible.

I now recognize Ranking Member Gosar for his opening statement.