

Ranking Member Lucas Opening Statement on Climate Change at Full Committee Hearing

Feb 12, 2019 Opening Statement

Chairwoman Johnson, I would like to thank you for holding this hearing and providing a platform to hold a constructive dialogue on the issue of climate change.

I'm proud to be a Western Oklahoma farmer and to represent a resilient community of farmers. As any farmer can tell you, we are especially dependent on the weather. Droughts and heat waves come and go naturally, but the changing climate has intensified their impacts.

We know the climate is changing and that global industrial activity has played a role in this phenomenon. But our communities, like the farmers and ranchers in my district, need to know more about the extent to which a changing climate affects short- and long-term weather patterns.

I believe the federal government has a responsibility to prioritize research so we can better understand the complex relationship between climate and weather and increase preparedness in our communities.

I also believe it is critical that America leads the world in developing the next generation technologies to address the effects of climate change.

Fortunately, we have a unique opportunity here on the Science Committee to promote research and technology solutions. American industry, innovators, and researchers at our national labs are pioneering technologies that capture carbon emissions from coal and natural gas, batteries that store energy from intermittent energy sources like wind and solar, and advanced nuclear reactors that can provide cleaner, more affordable power. These technologies have the potential to reduce greenhouse gas emissions around the world and ensure American energy dominance.

America has always led the way in technological advancement. In 1919, my great aunt's prized possession was a phonograph – a mechanical device which was then state-of-the-art-technology. A hundred years later, we listen to music on our cell phones, and no one could have predicted the incredible leap forward in technology. Americans are always innovating, finding surprising ways to meet new challenges.

Energy is no exception. Hydraulic fracturing revolutionized energy production, unlocking a vast, American energy resource that was unimaginable just a decade before. Developed by industry in cooperation with the national labs, fracking reduced the environmental footprint of energy production and brought cleaner, cheaper natural gas to the market around the world.

Through innovation, we can repeat this incredible success. The next technology breakthrough is right around the corner – and if we want to succeed, we must continue to focus on realistic, technology-driven solutions to climate change that can compete in today's economy.

We won't succeed with pie-in-the-sky policies that demand 100% renewable energy at the expense of reliable power from nuclear and fossil fuels and raise energy prices for businesses and consumers.

Today we will hear from Dr. Joseph Majkut, the Director of Climate Policy for the Niskanen Center, who will stress that it is essential that we take a realistic, innovative, and competitive approach to addressing climate change.

I share his belief that by investing in research to develop carbon capture, carbon use, advanced nuclear, and renewable energy technologies, we can incentivize innovation and growth in these industries – and reduce global emissions in the process. Innovation is good for the global environment and the American economy.

I take environmental policy very seriously. This dedication comes from being raised by people who lived through the worst prolonged environmental disaster in American history, the drought and dust bowl of the 1930s. We have a responsibility to ensure events like the dust bowl never happen again.

While this Committee cannot control the weather, we can prioritize investments in basic science and energy research that will revolutionize the global energy market.

America led the world in coal, oil, and gas. Now we must lead again, and partner with industry to develop breakthrough energy technologies and make our existing energy sources cleaner and more affordable. I thank our witnesses for being here today and I yield the balance of my time.