COMMITTEE ON
SCIENCE, SPACE, AND TECHNOLOGY
REPUBLICANS Frank Lucas, Ranking Member

Opening Statement of Ranking Member Frank Lucas

The Science Behind Impacts of the Climate Crisis
Friday, March 7, 2021

Thank you, Chairwoman Johnson. As we kick off our first climate-focused hearing this year, I want to reflect quickly on the milestone energy legislation we passed last year. Together we were able to pass the first update to federal energy policy in over a decade last Congress, and that is in no small part due to your leadership and willingness to hold good faith negotiations with this side of the aisle.

The Energy Act of 2020 includes more than a dozen bills from our Committee and focuses on competitive and innovative clean energy solutions driven by basic and early-stage research. It is a prime example of the work this Committee is uniquely positioned to do to combat climate change and strengthen American energy.

The simple truth is this: America's clean energy future will be driven by innovation—not by mandates. It's our job to support that innovation and invest in the basic research that will provide the springboard for new clean energy technologies.

One of our witnesses today, Dr. Zeke Hausfather points out that the U.S. is in a unique position right now to accelerate research, development, and deployment of low-carbon technologies across all sectors of the American economy.

Through targeted investment and demonstration of federal research, we can develop direct air carbon capture, small modular nuclear reactors, and other technologies that will completely transform our energy production to a cleaner, more efficient industry, unrecognizable from a century ago. And we can do this without raising energy prices and hurting American consumers.

I worry that the costs of making immediate and drastic changes to our energy portfolio are being ignored by some of my friends on the other side of the aisle. Imposing strict mandates is going to make it harder for our businesses to compete with China, whose greenhouse gas emissions continue to grow. But we have hard evidence that investing in innovation allows us to cut our emissions while growing our economy.

For instance, using discoveries at our National Labs to improve hydraulic fracturing technology has given us more access to clean natural gas. That in turn has played a

large role in the 10% decline in U.S. greenhouse gas emissions between 2005 and 2018. In that same period, our economy grew by 25%.

Higher costs also hurt American families, and rural households are especially vulnerable to energy price swings. And we have to be mindful of the many communities whose economies depend on our current energy infrastructure.

So I want to be very clear: abandoning our current energy infrastructure *is* a regional impact of climate change. Just like moving away from rising sea level on the coast, entire families would be displaced if we move too quickly to prohibit fossil fuel use.

Fossil fuels are not the enemy. They are the most reliable form of energy in the U.S. and will continue to be a large part of our energy portfolio. Our focus shouldn't be on eliminating fossil fuels, but on making their production and use cleaner and more efficient. We're already making headway: according to the International Energy Agency and the Breakthrough Institute, it is quite possible that global CO2 emissions from fossil fuels peaked last year in 2019.

We know what we need to do from here: invest in the tools needed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, like advanced nuclear power, carbon capture, and greater energy storage capacity to make renewables more reliable. If we want to make real progress addressing climate change, we need to move forward on these bipartisan priorities.

We've taken the first step with the Energy Act, and I look forward to working together on more practical clean energy solutions. Thank you Madam Chair and I yield back the balance of my time.