



COMMITTEE ON SCIENCE SPACE & TECHNOLOGY

REPUBLICANS

Opening Statement of Ranking Member Frank Lucas

Full Committee Hearing – Now or Never: The Urgent Need for Ambitious Climate Action

April 28, 2022

Thank you, Chairwoman Johnson. We're here to discuss another angle on climate change, in a continuation of previous hearings we've had on this subject. My hope is that today, we can focus on the most significant action our committee can take to address this challenge: supporting breakthrough energy technologies.

In the past 15 years, the United States has decreased our total emissions by 21%, which puts us on track to meet the Obama Administration's goal of reducing emissions by 26% by 2025. That's significant progress, and an achievement we should be proud of. How did we get here? Through breakthrough technologies.

In 1990, more than half of our electricity was generated by coal. Today that's down to 20%. In that same time period, wind, solar, and natural gas energy ballooned. Together, they now account for 50% of our electricity generation. We've also made coal cleaner since the 90s, reducing emissions in the process. We couldn't have made this clean energy progress without new discoveries. We needed the new drill-bit technologies developed at our National Labs, for instance, to power the natural gas revolution.

All this is to say that we've proven that new technologies are critical to emissions reductions. Investing in technological development through R&D is what I see as the carrot approach to addressing climate change.

The flip side of that is the stick approach. That's what we've seen in Europe with mandates and strict limits on certain kinds of energy. The result of the stick approach is a cautionary tale – prices have gone up, emissions reductions haven't matched ours, and now, with Russia's war against Ukraine, Europe is facing energy shortages.

That's why it's so important for us to take an all-of-the-above approach to clean energy development. Now, more than ever, we can appreciate the value of American energy independence. We can't afford to shut off valuable energy sources in a misguided attempt to reduce emissions.

Instead, we need to focus on the science and technologies of tomorrow.

I'm very proud of the work we did on the Energy Act of 2020 to do just that. It invested in fundamental research and development in high-risk, high-reward next-generation energy technologies. It also took a broad approach to clean energy that included a wide

range of renewable sources as well as essential technologies like advanced nuclear, energy storage, carbon capture, and research into cleaner and more efficient use of fossil fuels. It supports innovation with an approach that keeps American energy competitive and prices low for consumers and businesses. And it did all of that without a single mandate, goal, or regulation related to emissions.

The natural follow-on for the Energy Act is the DOE Science for the Future Act, which is part of a dozen bipartisan bills the Science Committee passed in an effort to make the U.S. more competitive and put our technological development into overdrive. The DOE Science for the Future Act will significantly increase our funding for basic research at the Department of Energy, focusing on transformative technology. As we begin conferencing this legislation, which was shoehorned into the larger COMPETES Act, my priority will be to focus the final package on the smart bipartisan legislation we crafted together, and to reduce the amount of superfluous policies tacked on at the last minute.

I'd be remiss if I didn't talk about the global implications of our fight to address climate change. This is, after all, a global problem. When we take unrealistic approaches to addressing climate change, what we do is empower our adversaries. Punitive measures that make fossil fuel production too expensive or simply prohibited gives Russia a corner on the market for natural gas. That money then funds Putin's war against free people in Ukraine.

The cherry on top is that reducing our own production of natural gas actually hurts our emissions goals, because Russian natural gas has higher emissions over its lifetime. So cutting back on our domestic production might pay lip service to climate change goals, but in reality it does more harm than good.

Another way we are empowering our adversaries is through proposals in the COMPETES Act to send money to the UN climate fund. This sets up a pipeline – the wrong kind. It's a pipeline of U.S. taxpayer dollars to communist leadership in China. The Chinese Communist Party is a dishonest partner in the effort to cut emissions. Despite their pledges to the Paris Agreement, China's emissions have continued to grow. Even worse, it was found that China significantly underreported its emissions in the lead-up to the agreement taking effect, making it hard to trust its current reports.

If we implement reckless mandates to cut emissions, we'll drive up prices for American businesses and make it even more difficult for us to compete with China on the global stage. We simply cannot afford that. So today I'm hopeful that we can focus on solutions that keep American energy affordable and accessible while also helping us to reduce emissions.

Mr. Harrell, I'd like to thank you for attending and for joining us in person. I'm interested in hearing your perspective on market-friendly climate change efforts.

With that, Madame Chair, I yield the balance of my time.