



Opening Statement
(As Prepared for Delivery)
Rep. Kathy Castor (D-FL)
U.S. House Select Committee on the Climate Crisis
Generation Climate: Young Leaders Urge Climate Action Now
April 4, 2019

Welcome to first hearing of the House Select Committee on the Climate Crisis. We are explicitly charged with finding solutions to solve the climate crisis so we can “honor our responsibility to be good stewards of the planet for future generations.” So today we’re starting with the people who are the most affected by the climate crisis: young people who are growing up in it, who bear the costs and burdens, and who will help find the opportunities before us.

The last time global monthly temperatures were below average was [February of 1985](#). That means all our witnesses and everyone who is 34 years or younger have grown up in a world that has been forever altered by climate change. In fact, this is the first Congress with members who have grown up in the climate crisis. Six of our colleagues were born after that last below-average month. And the severity of the climate crisis this generation will have to deal with in their lifetimes depends on what actions we take now.

We have made some significant progress in recent year in cutting carbon pollution, but it has not been enough to stop the climate crisis. Communities across the country are feeling the impacts of climate change and bearing enormous costs here and now.

When I was in science class, I didn’t learn about how burning fossil fuels could change the climate. But students learn about that now. Millennials and Generation Z have grown up knowing we are in a climate crisis. Now they are demanding that we address it.

And I want to be clear: while we certainly are talking of about small children, we also are talking about a young, vibrant and smart generation that is central to America’s democracy. They work. They pay taxes. They vote.

And increasingly, they are doing everything they can to solve the climate crisis. In their schools, in their houses of worship, in their communities, they are taking action. And they are demanding that elected officials do the same.

Solving the climate crisis also offers opportunities for them. Some of the [fastest growing jobs](#) in America are solar installers and wind turbine technicians. These are no longer the jobs of the future, they are the jobs that this generation is doing to solve the climate crisis right now.

This is a transformative generation. The March for Our Lives, the People's Climate Movement, the massive student Climate Strikes we saw all around the world: these are movements led by young people who are demanding climate justice for their generation and the generations of young people who will come after them.

70% of young people in America say they [worry](#) about climate change. And based on the latest science from the administration's own National Climate Assessment and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, they have reason to worry. Seas are rising. Snowpack is melting away and in many parts of the country, droughts are getting worse. Hot, humid heat waves are becoming more intense. We're faced with more days where people cannot safely work or play outside. And higher temperatures mean that other pollutants, like ground-level ozone from car exhaust will become even more damaging to our health.

What is necessary to address the climate crisis is to stop carbon pollution from accumulating in our atmosphere. That requires action. Urgent action. Ambitious action. Every ton of carbon pollution we avoid, every new solar panel and wind turbine we bring online, brings us one step closer to solving the climate change challenge.

And we have seen progress toward this goal. After years of finger-pointing, we had a diplomatic breakthrough on climate change. The United States, China, India, Europe and countries all around the world have agreed to cut carbon pollution. So I have introduced legislation - HR9, the Climate Action Now Act - that would require the Trump Administration to honor those commitments the United States has already made because we are still in that agreement right now and will be at least through 2020.

So I want all the young people who are here with us today, who are here watching at school and at home to hear this promise: We can't afford to let you down or disappoint you. The time for rejecting climate science is over. The time for frustration and despair in the face of the climate crisis must end. This is a time for hope, this is a time for solutions, this is a time for us to come together – all generations, all political persuasions – for action to combat the climate crisis. You are rising to the occasion. We must rise with you.

Finally, when I was preparing for this hearing, I was reminded that April 4th – today - is the anniversary of the date in 1968 when we lost one of our great spiritual and political leaders: Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

Dr. King understood how powerful young people are when it comes to fighting for justice. In 1960, amid some of the most intense student activism of the civil rights movement, [Dr. King told students at Spelman College](#):

Keep moving, for it may well be that the greatest song has not yet been sung, the greatest book has not been written, the highest mountain has not been climbed. This is your challenge!

Today solving the climate crisis is not just your challenge. It is the challenge we all share. And this committee is dedicated to ensuring that Congress meets it with you.