

Rep. Susan A. Davis
Testimony
House Select Committee on the Climate Crisis
November 14, 2019

Chairwoman Castor, Ranking Member Graves, and Members of the Select Committee, it is a pleasure to join you today to discuss what we know is the biggest challenge of our time – climate change.

I am glad the Select Committee is meeting today to take testimony on this very important issue and I am pleased to be part of the conversation.

After successful passage of H.R. 9, the Climate Action Now Act, I am looking forward to what the Select Committee will come up with next.

NEED TO ACT ON CLIMATE CHANGE

As we have seen, there is no simple solution.

Not only do we have to consider how we mitigate the impacts of climate change, we also have to come up with a plan to adapt to future changes.

How do we create a sustainable commitment to reduce carbon emissions and plan for the future?

One place I have looked is my hometown -- San Diego.

San Diego enacted its own Climate Action Plan to eliminate half of all greenhouse gas emissions in the city by 2035 and develop an adaptation and resiliency plan for future impacts.

The plan includes a number of policies. However, two areas I would like to focus on today are transportation and developing resiliency plans.

TRANSPORTATION

Transportation is the largest source of emissions in the United States, accounting for 29% of man-made greenhouse gas emissions in the United States.

To address this, we will need more fuel-efficient vehicles, more alternative fuels with less carbon content, and we will simply have to drive less.

As automakers develop more economical electric and alternative-fuel vehicles, we will need to ensure that we have the infrastructure available to accommodate them.

Research shows that electric vehicles lack adequate infrastructure, despite surging demand in recent years. We must fix that.

Beyond infrastructure, the federal government must play a major role in promoting cleaner modes of transportation.

In San Diego, for example, the city's Climate Action Plan includes changing policy to have a majority of the city's fleet be electric vehicles.

Similarly, we should move forward with a transition of vehicle fleets of federal agencies to electric vehicles, hybrid electric vehicles, or alternative fuel vehicles.

According to the Government Services Administration (GSA), the federal government owns or leases over 640,000 vehicles across all agencies at a cost of \$814 million in fuel costs in a single year.

With the proper transition plan and achievable benchmarks, this is one area where we could certainly help reduce our carbon footprint.

Last, we should make matching funds available for communities that want to build infrastructure for bicycling and public transport.

This would help reduce how much time we spend in our vehicles.

BUILDING BETTER, MORE RESILIENT CITIES

As mentioned earlier, we will also have to think critically about developing resiliency plans.

Many parts of the country are already seeing the effects of climate change: record-breaking fires in California, historic floods in the Midwest, and hurricanes along the east coast.

These events are becoming more frequent and more intense and yet we continue to build and rebuild in areas that are prone to climate change-related hazards.

We see it every year in California and across the country. But we don't have to wait for disasters to develop a resilience plan.

We need to improve building codes and land use practices and consider the future impact of climate change rather than rely solely on the historical record.

We also need to include the development of resilience in building plans, build more resilient infrastructure, and work towards restricting sprawl and increasing density.

San Diego is currently in the process of developing a climate resiliency plan to address climate change-related vulnerabilities across the city and develop adaptation measures to improve the city's resilience to climate hazards.

It's time that we do that too -- as a nation -- because more disasters are sure to come and they will be costly.

We are currently appropriating hundreds of millions of dollars to rebuild after each hundred-year storm or record-breaking wildfire.

We should consider making funding for repairs and reconstruction after disasters contingent on the development of adaptation and resiliency plans.

Ultimately, Congress must play a role in making more resilient cities a reality by building on existing legislation.

I would like to thank you again for giving me the opportunity to be a part of this important conversation.

And I will look forward to your recommendations.