

**Opening Statement of Republican Leader Greg Walden
Subcommittee on the Environment and Climate Change
“Building a 100 Percent Clean Economy: Pathways to Net Zero Industrial Emissions”
September 18, 2019**

As Prepared for Delivery

Good morning, Mr. Chairman.

It has been seven months since Mr. Shimkus, Mr. Upton, and I wrote an op-ed highlighting the need to find commonsense, bipartisan solutions to address current and future climate risks. It has also been seven months since this committee held its first hearing on climate change where many members on both sides of the aisle expressed interest in working together to find common sense, bipartisan solutions to address climate change. Following that hearing, Mr. Shimkus and I sent a letter to Chairman Pallone and Mr. Tonko requesting the committee work together on this important issue.

Unfortunately, that has not happened. Our Democratic colleagues have not engaged with our side in any meaningful way, and the politics of climate change has taken precedent over rolling up our sleeves and getting to work on bipartisan solutions. Regrettably, my Democratic colleagues are allowing the loudest, most radical voices in Congress and on the presidential campaign trail dominate the climate debate in their party.

The gap between rhetoric and reality among Democrats has gotten out of hand.

Leading Democrats are calling for the elimination of nuclear power – fortunately not our Chairman here – but nearly every single major candidate wants to eliminate or phase out nuclear power. This is not smart. Nuclear is ideal for dealing with climate change, because it is the only emissions-free energy source that’s available 24 hours a day. Nuclear represents over half of our nation’s carbon-free energy. Experts from Bill Gates to Ernie Moniz have said that nuclear must be a part of our energy mix going forward to reduce emissions. To reduce emissions, we need nuclear power. Democrats who are unable to say those simple words are doing as much harm to solving the climate crisis as any other.

Leading Democrats have called innovations such as carbon capture “false solutions.” If your goal is to reduce emissions, that logic simply doesn’t follow. We need to be encouraging these technologies, just as we have with President Trump signing into law critical tax credits for carbon capture technology.

Leading Democrats have also called for a ban on fracking and natural gas development. The production of natural gas helped the United States become a global leader in energy production and a major energy exporter. It substantially helped us reduce our overall emissions – in 2017, U.S. carbon emissions were the lowest they have been since

1992, and they are projected to remain steady in upcoming years. The United States achieved these reductions while emissions were climbing in most of Asia and Europe. Such a ban would wipe out a major source of American prosperity, lead to Americans paying higher prices for the same energy, and increased reliance on foreign sources – with no impact on the world’s appetite for energy. This is not a serious approach and it should be called out.

Now, I know that many of my friends on the other side of the dais don’t agree with all of these positions. But unfortunately, the all-or-nothing talking points from many Democrats are preventing us from building on the progress we made last Congress to reduce emissions, boost clean energy, and protect America’s economy and workers. Maybe that’s why, as E&E News reported, “House Democrats have little to show on climate.”

Turning to the topic of today’s hearing: As Bill Gates warned in a recent op-ed, “we have a lot of inventing to do” in order to achieve zero carbon emissions overall. Mr. Gates rightly pointed out that we don’t yet have any proven breakthroughs that will give us affordable zero-carbon versions of basic building materials like steel, cement, glass, aluminum, plastic, and paper, which account for a fifth of all emissions. Without more serious consideration of the scale of what would be realistically achievable here and abroad to reduce emissions, “100 by ‘50” is less of a solution and more of a slogan.

If Democrats want to tackle climate change, they should work with Republicans, because that's how we're going to get to serious solutions that can become law. There are bipartisan bills in Congress that we could pass right now to ensure the United States remains a global leader in emissions reduction, economic productivity, and clean energy production. And there are more ideas that we could explore together.

We are waiting at the table and are ready to continue the work we started last Congress with our Democratic colleagues on climate policy focused on innovation, conservation, and preparation.

Let's work together.