

OPENING STATEMENT
Ranking Member Suzanne Bonamici (D-OR)
of the Subcommittee on Environment

House Committee on Science, Space, & Technology
Subcommittee on Environment
Subcommittee on Oversight
“At What Cost? Examining the Social Cost of Carbon”
February 28, 2017

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And thank you to our witnesses for being here today.

The “social cost of carbon” is a metric used to value the damage caused by emitting one ton of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere in a year. It provides a consistent value for all federal agencies to use for their cost benefit analyses on regulatory efforts that reduce carbon dioxide emissions.

There are some people who criticize this metric, but the Government Accountability Office and independent peer review by the National Academy of Sciences have validated it many times. Additionally, federal courts have upheld that the methodology used to develop the social cost of carbon is based on robust science and sound economic analysis.

It is critical that updates to the social cost of carbon metric are based on the best available science and updated economic analysis based on peer reviewed literature. The Government Accountability Office has found that the methodology used to develop the social cost of carbon was based on peer reviewed academic literature and took steps to incorporate new information as it became available. This process also provided ample opportunity for public comment on both the social cost of carbon and the regulations that use the metric in their cost benefit analyses.

Some people suggest that regulations to reduce emissions of carbon dioxide and other pollutants are unnecessary because climate change does not exist, or human activity does not contribute to it. But simply ignoring a fact does not make it any less true. The climate is warming and we need to work now to limit the consequences for future generations. Our children and grandchildren should not inherit an environment that degrades their health and harms their future economy.

Economic growth and reducing carbon pollution are not in conflict with one another. Clean energy development allows us to continue powering our communities in ways that avoid long-term negative consequences on future generations. It also gives us the opportunity to bring new living wage jobs into our communities. In fact, the American Wind Energy Association found that the wind energy sector accounts for 3,000 jobs throughout my home state of Oregon alone. In addition to boosting Oregon's economy, wind energy generation avoided more than one million tons of statewide carbon dioxide emissions in 2015.

The social cost of carbon is not a product of a single President, a single scientific study, or a single legal action. It is rooted in overwhelming scientific consensus on climate change, and efforts spanning thirty years from both the executive and judicial branches of the federal government. These factors, coupled with a transparent development process and strong economic analysis, form the basis of this metric that has been used in at least 79 federal regulations, including fuel economy standards for vehicles, energy efficiency measures for home appliances, and regulations such as the Clean Power Plan.

This metric was not invented to serve a political agenda, but in fact was developed to meet a legal mandate to justify, in simple terms of dollars and cents, how the federal government's actions will affect Americans today, and our children and grandchildren tomorrow. I look forward to hearing how we may best continue to use the social cost of carbon in support of policies that protect our environment.

With that I would like to again thank the witnesses for being here today, and I yield back the balance of my time.