

Subcommittee on Energy and Air Quality hearing entitled, "Climate Benefits of Improved Building Energy Efficiency."

Mr. Chairman, thank you for convening this hearing on the important issue of how we can improve the energy efficiency of our buildings, to limit greenhouse gas emissions that are causing climate change.

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July 17, 2008

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Few subjects related to energy efficiency have consumed more time and political energy than the subject of vehicle fuel economy. Yet our national fleet of buildings consumes 38 percent more energy on an annual basis than does our national fleet of cars, trucks, and airplanes.

In the first session of this Congress, the Energy Independence and Security Act of 2007 included a provision that mandated a 40 percent improvement in the fuel economy of automobiles and light trucks, a provision that had my full attention and that of many other Members. At the same time, a provision to provide for a 30 percent improvement in the minimum energy efficiency of new homes was unceremoniously dropped in the Senate after passing twice in this body.

Unlike motor vehicles, new technology is not an issue in the building sector; the experts tell us — and will tell us again today — that technologies are available today that could double the energy efficiency of our buildings without shrinking them, making them less safe, or making them less able functional.

A car put into service this year might remain in the automobile fleet for an average of about 12 years, on until 2020. But a new home or commercial building put into service this year will remain in use for more than a century.

Improving

the energy efficiency of our buildings may prove to be a larger, more urgent, and much better opportunity to reduce energy consumption and related greenhouse gas emissions. It is an opportunity that deserves greater and more urgent attention from this Congress and from all Americans. I look forward to this hearing, and to learning from this fine group of witnesses what we can and should do to address this important issue.

Prepared by the Committee on Energy and Commerce

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