

Chairman Dingell at the Subcommittee on Energy and Air Quality hearing entitled, "Addressing Climate Change -- Views from Private Sector Panels"

Statement of Congressman John D. Dingell, Chairman
Committee on Energy and Commerce

SUBCOMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND AIR QUALITY HEARING ENTITLED
"ADDRESSING CLIMATE CHANGE -- VIEWS FROM PRIVATE SECTOR PANELS"
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Mr. Chairman, thank you for calling this important hearing. Today we begin to confront a topic that has emerged as a central environmental issue of our time. We have before us an ambitious goal -- to produce legislation that will adequately address climate change without causing undue harm to our economy and the lives of our citizens. To say that this task is difficult qualifies as a vast understatement; To say that because it will be difficult, we should not grapple with it, qualifies as folly.

As I look ahead to the coming months, I am reminded of the sign hanging on an office door proclaiming the following:
"Good, Fast, Cheap: Pick Any Two."

That is the kind of choice that we could face unless we adhere carefully to a few guiding principles.

First, we must be thorough. Chairman Boucher and I have laid out a comprehensive series of hearings that aim to explore all aspects of this complex topic: the scientific views on the causes and effects of climate change; the policy options that are available to the United States; the consequences of those policy options for various segments of society; and how those options can fit into a global solution. This week alone we are conducting two hearings and continuing our series of regular Friday staff briefings.

Second, we must work in a bipartisan fashion. Neither party has a monopoly on wisdom. It will take all of us working together, representing the diverse viewpoints of the American people, to reach a successful solution. The Clean Air Act Amendments of 1990 reflected hard fought and difficult negotiations but ultimately resulted in a product that passed the House by a margin of 401 - 25.

Lastly, we must keep an open mind. All policy options must be on the table. As the Committee learns more about the complexity of this issue, certain policy alternatives will fall by the wayside. That is the natural order of the legislative process. The Administration has already signaled that it will oppose certain policy options, a position that I find regrettable. In order to be successful, we must go where the facts and a solid consensus lead us.

Some of our witnesses today have experience in reaching agreement on this issue. They represent diverse interests, ranging from environmental groups to heavy industry, yet they have worked together to unite behind certain ideas. I look forward to learning how their experience may inform ours.

As we begin our work, let me finally note that this will not be an abstract endeavor or an exercise in public relations. This is a legislative process, and it will encompass all that the phrase entails. The challenge is difficult, but I can think of no

committee better equipped to meet it. Our Committee has proven that it can resolve complex and difficult environmental issues. This Committee produced Superfund, the Safe Drinking Water Act, the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act, and, as I mentioned earlier, the Clean Air Act Amendments of 1990 -- all of them landmark environmental statutes.

Mr. Chairman, I look forward to this hearing, and I thank you for leading us into what promises to be another definitive chapter in this Committee's fine history.

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