

Opening Statement  
Chairman Frank Pallone, Jr.  
Energy and Commerce Committee  
Subcommittee on Environment and Climate Change  
Hearing on “Building a 100 Percent Clean Economy: Solutions for Economy-Wide Deep  
Decarbonization”  
December 5, 2019

Today’s hearing is the seventh hearing in the Committee’s work to achieve a 100 percent clean economy by 2050. So far, we have examined ways to decarbonize specific sectors of the U.S. economy – including the electricity sector, buildings, transportation, and heavy industry. We also discussed the impact of climate change on frontline communities.

Throughout these hearings, witnesses told us that we need sector-specific solutions for climate action, especially in sectors that are more difficult to decarbonize. But they also repeatedly pointed to the need for economy-wide measures to ensure we cut pollution across all sectors. Today, we’ll explore these cross-cutting mechanisms and the role they should play in addressing the climate crisis.

This hearing couldn’t come at a more important time. As we speak, world leaders are meeting in Madrid for the 25th Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, or COP 25. President Trump is noticeably absent from the summit. This is the same President who, just one month ago, started the formal process of withdrawing the United States from the Paris Agreement. If President Trump gets his way, we will be the only country to oppose and abandon the Agreement.

I had the privilege to travel to COP 25 with a bicameral Congressional delegation, which included Reps. Castor, Peters and Dingell. On our visit, we reminded world leaders and activists that despite the President’s retreat from this global crisis, we are still in. And they made clear that they were grateful that someone was there to represent the United States, because our leadership is so important.

Our continued commitment to the Paris Agreement is more important than ever. New information comes out each week stressing the urgent need for climate action. Just last week, for instance, the United Nations released its annual Emissions Gap report, showing the divergence between current emissions projections and the reductions needed to avoid catastrophic climate change. The report warned that we’re on track to miss those targets. And not just by an inch, but by a mile.

The Paris Agreement adopted the science-based target of limiting warming to 1.5 to 2 degrees Celsius by 2100. The U.N. report, however, warned that we’re heading toward 3.9 degrees of warming by the end of the century. Think about that for a moment – that’s almost double the limit needed to avoid the most damaging consequences of climate change.

Not meeting these targets would have devastating consequences. It would lead to increasingly frequent extreme weather events, more damaging wildfires, rapid sea level rise, more persistent

flooding and droughts, threats to entire ecosystems and food supplies, and countless other hazards.

Meanwhile, a report by the Global Carbon Project, released just yesterday, showed that carbon dioxide emissions will hit an all-time high this year. And on Tuesday, the World Meteorological Organization reported that 2019 will be the second or third hottest year ever recorded.

These are startling trends. But if there's one thing I learned in Spain, it's that this is not a time for despair. It's a time for bold leadership and ambitious action. One of the key reasons that the rest of the world is not meeting these targets is because of the lack of leadership they are seeing right now from the Trump Administration.

That is why this Committee is hard at work developing our proposal to reach net-zero emissions by 2050. This is the consensus from the scientific community on what we must do to avoid the worst impacts of climate change.

Today we will hear about options for robust, comprehensive, and economy-wide policy solutions to hit that target. We will also hear about the essential role the federal government must play.

And finally, we will hear about how economy-wide climate action will not only reduce emissions, but will also stimulate the economy. By investing in the low- and zero-carbon technologies of the future, the United States can become a world leader in clean energy innovation.

I look forward to hearing from our witnesses. Thank you, Chairman Tonko, and I yield back.