

Opening Statement  
Chairman Frank Pallone, Jr.  
Committee on Energy and Commerce  
Subcommittee on Environment and Climate Change  
Hearing on “We’ll Always Have Paris: Filling the Leadership Void Caused by Federal Inaction  
on Climate Change:”  
February 28, 2019

I want to thank Chairman Tonko for scheduling this hearing as the Committee continues to discuss the growing crisis of climate change, and the ways that we can combat it.

For the last two years, President Trump, his administration and Republicans here in Congress have repeatedly pushed actions and policies that would only make the crisis worse.

We are here today to discuss one of those actions. President Trump’s decision to pull out of the Paris Agreement is unjustified and dangerously shortsighted. It abdicates U.S. leadership on global climate action – an issue where America has always been a leader – and breaks our promise to all nations who joined the historic agreement. I believe the Trump Administration’s retreat puts the health and safety of our communities at great risk, and seriously jeopardizes our future security. It also puts our economic future at great risk as the world embarks on a major transition to a low-carbon economy. President Trump now wants to pull us out of that agreement.

The Paris Agreement – an agreement reached by nearly 200 nations – was an important, unified stand in the fight against our changing climate. It sets a strong foundation for action that will accelerate the shift to a clean energy economy, and puts us on the path to a safer, healthier planet for generations to come. It is also our best hope of mobilizing the global action needed to avoid catastrophic changes to our environment.

The Paris Agreement represents a significant departure from past efforts to secure international cooperation on climate change. It allows each nation to design its own emission reduction strategy –that is best suited to the unique circumstances of its society and economy.

Importantly, the Paris Agreement applies to all parties to the Convention – including India and China. It also includes critical transparency and accountability measures, to ensure countries are meeting their emissions reduction goals and have the flexibility to make any necessary adjustments to stay on track.

The Obama Administration’s plan to meet the goals of this agreement were reasonable, achievable and balanced. It provided a framework in reducing U.S. emissions, while also growing our economy. More energy efficient appliances, buildings and vehicles result in lower costs for consumers and keep our manufacturing industries competitive globally, all while lowering emissions of harmful air pollutants.

The plan also called for controlling methane emissions from the oil and gas sector, which was a long-overdue and sensible step. So too was curbing carbon emissions from the power sector

under the Clean Power Plan. In fact, the reductions required by the Clean Power Plan were so reasonable that most of the power sector is now meeting them.

Yet the Trump Administration has methodically stalled or rolled back all these initiatives. This Administration's actions reflect a determination to lock-in fossil fuel dependence for consumers, reversing meaningful progress and setting the planet on a dangerous course.

The good news is that the rest of world and many states, cities, and businesses here in the United States have rejected the Trump Administration's retreat on climate change. They have declared: "We are still in." They are leading the way to cleaner energy, greater energy efficiency, lower consumer costs, more resilient communities, and new technologies and businesses.

While each individual contribution by these nonfederal actors may be small, together they add up to significant emission reductions. And, just as importantly, their experience lays the foundation for further progress. But make no mistake, meaningful future climate action needs federal leadership to be successful. We cannot assume state, local, and private sector initiatives will be enough to effectively limit global temperature increases.

We have the tools and technology to replace fossil fuel dominance with clean energy, but we need to deploy them faster. But, we will also need new technologies and infrastructure to achieve the deeper de-carbonization of the economy that will ensure our long-term safety and prosperity. We have a lot of work to do.

The time for action to avoid the worst effects of climate change is growing short, but we still have time to act. At a minimum, the United States must fulfill the commitments we made to the world in the Paris Agreement. The federal government simply cannot stand on the sidelines – we must show that we are still committed to this global agreement.