

Opening Statement
Chairman Frank Pallone, Jr.
Committee on Energy and Commerce
Subcommittee on Environment & Climate Change
Hearing on “Lessons from Across the Nation: State and Local Action to Combat Climate
Change”
April 2, 2019

This morning we will hear from elected representatives of state and local governments about what they are doing to address climate change. Their actions are more important than ever considering the Trump Administration denies climate change is happening and continues to push policies that will only make it worse.

I am particularly pleased to welcome Governor Jay Inslee back to the Committee on Energy and Commerce, where he served with many of us while he was in Congress.

Governor Inslee’s focus on climate change is not new. In 2002, he championed an Apollo-style effort to support technologies and policies to transition the nation to a low-carbon economy. Now, as Governor of Washington, he is showing that addressing the climate crisis is not only good policy, it is good business. He also co-founded the bipartisan U.S. Climate Alliance, leading the way for other states to take meaningful steps toward fulfilling our commitments under the Paris Climate Agreement.

The mayors on our second panel reflect the dedication and ingenuity of local leaders facing the climate crisis head-on, and the success of non-partisan, community-focused solutions.

The impressive work of the leaders here today is heartening, but they can’t address the magnitude of the climate crisis alone. They need the support and leadership of a strong federal partner.

State and local government initiatives to reduce greenhouse gas pollution stand in stark contrast to the recent actions by the Trump Administration. This Administration is doing all it can to “lean in” to more greenhouse gas pollution, more global warming, and a more uncertain and dangerous future for our country and the rest of the world.

Scientists warn us that some of these impacts will get worse if we fail to act now, and the evidence is very clear, particularly to the communities on the front line of climate change. Whether they are represented by Democrats or Republicans, they are well aware that the costs of climate change go far beyond the ones to which we can attach a dollar figure.

This is true in my district where Superstorm Sandy devastated communities up and down the shore, along with many others in the Northeast. Today, as we sit here, there is record flooding in the Midwest claiming lives and destroying homes, communities, and businesses that people spent a lifetime building. Those communities know that the time for debate and inaction should have been over long ago.

State and local governments acting on climate change are positioning themselves as leaders in a new low-carbon economy. Seventeen states of the Climate Alliance reported last year that they attracted more than \$110 billion in clean energy investments in the past decade. And they realized billions of dollars in public health and environmental benefits.

Our nation has always been at the forefront in the creation of new industries, new technologies and new jobs. We should strive to improve upon that record.

Unfortunately, the Trump Administration wants to take us backwards by withdrawing from the Paris Agreement. We simply cannot allow that to happen, which is why Democrats have introduced H.R. 9, the Climate Action Now Act. This legislation would stop President Trump from pulling out of the Paris Agreement and require him to submit a plan for meeting our obligations under that pact. We will be marking up that legislation tomorrow here in the full Committee.

But we cannot stop there. I plan to move legislation that will support state and local government efforts to address climate change and give Members on both sides of the aisle an opportunity to help communities save money, create jobs and cut their greenhouse gas emissions.

Taking action on climate will lead to the development of new industries and new jobs. It will also make our communities safer and more resilient. But state and local governments cannot do it on their own. The federal government must be a strong partner by expanding the use of clean energy and reducing fossil fuel emissions.

The scientific community has warned us for years about the dangers of unchecked greenhouse gas pollution. We cannot ignore their warning. We have the technology to address this problem, but we need to apply it more broadly and more aggressively.

State and local governments are demonstrating that it can be done. We should join with them and reaffirm that the United States is indeed committed to acting on climate.