

Statement of Rep. Henry A. Waxman
July 19, 2006

Today, the Subcommittee holds only the second hearing on global warming in the Energy and Commerce Committee since the Republicans took over the House of Representatives in 1995. With so many important aspects to global warming and twelve years of virtual inaction, there's a lot of important work for the Committee to do.

It could start by highlighting the overwhelming scientific consensus that global warming is real and is caused by humans. Or it could focus on some of the important recent scientific news on global warming, such as the study showing that climate change is causing increased wildfires in the American West or the recent studies that show that global warming is leading to more intense hurricanes.

The Committee could go a step further by examining the practical solutions that can begin to reduce our green house gas emissions. And if it wanted to conduct important and non-partisan oversight, it could investigate why a former employee of ExxonMobil operated out of the Bush White House to sow doubt in government publications on global warming.

Instead, the Committee is doing exactly what the big oil companies hope for it to do...it ignores the important questions and diverts to a ridiculous effort to discredit a climate scientist and a study he published eight years ago.

Chairman Barton began this dubious investigation when he wrote Dr. Michael Mann and several other researchers in June 2005. He demanded to know the source of funding for every study they had ever conducted, demanded they turnover all of the data for all of their research, and made other burdensome and intrusive requests.

The Washington Post accused Chairman Barton of conducting a witch hunt. The Chairman of the House Science Committee Sherwood Boehlert called the investigation "misguided" and "illegitimate." And the nation's premiere science organizations quickly condemned the investigation. The American Association for the Advancement of Science wrote to Chairman Barton stating that his letters "give the impression of a search for some basis on which to discredit these particular scientists and findings, rather than a search for understanding."

The National Academy of Sciences also weighed in, stating that Chairman Barton's approach was "intimidating" to researchers and offering the services of the Academy to help resolve the controversy.

Ironically, it wasn't Chairman Barton who took the Academy up on its offer. Instead, Rep. Boehlert requested the Academy report that was released last month. The Academy largely upheld the findings of Dr. Mann.

This hearing isn't about finding the truth. It's about sowing doubt and spreading disinformation. The closest parallel is the decades-long campaign of the tobacco industry to deny that nicotine is addictive and cigarettes cause cancer.

And the hearing isn't even fair. Today we're going to attack the work of Dr. Mann, but we're not going to give Dr. Mann a chance to confront the accusations against him. Dr. Mann was

willing to testify before the Committee, but his schedule was not accommodated and so he is going to be tried in absentia.

Global warming is an incredibly serious problem, but this is not a serious hearing. It's a diversion and a delaying tactic. And – worst of all – it is a missed opportunity to begin the process of protecting our children from the catastrophic effects of global warming.

I know that the Chairman of this Subcommittee has never accepted the science about global warming. To bolster his argument over the years, he has repeatedly brought to the attention of the Committee, the views of Gregg Easterbrook and his book, “A Moment on the Earth.”

So, I just want to make sure that the Chairman is aware of Mr. Easterbrook's op-ed from May 26, 2006, in which Mr. Easterbrook announces that he has changed from “a skeptic to a convert.” He says that it is “case closed,” and that a strong scientific consensus shows that global warming “is a real phenomenon posing real danger.”

I am glad that Mr. Easterbrook has revisited his views and corrected them accordingly. I hope the Chairman is willing to do the same.