

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

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M E M O R A N D U M

TO: Democratic Members
Committee on Energy and Commerce

FROM: John D. Dingell, Chairman
Rick Boucher, Chairman, Subcommittee on Energy and Air Quality

SUBJECT: Climate Change Agenda

As we indicated last week, the Committee on Energy and Commerce will soon begin a series of hearings on the critical issue of global climate change. Our examination of the issue will be comprehensive and will include scientific, economic, environmental, legal, and public policy perspectives, as it should. The work of the Committee that led to enactment of the 1990 Clean Air Act Amendments was of similar complexity and extremely hard-fought. However, because the Committee took the time, had members with sufficient expertise, and explored all aspects of a difficult issue, we enacted a landmark environmental protection law that has stood the test of time.

The issue of climate change has implications for the environment, economy, and energy security of the United States. Therefore, in the best traditions of this Committee, our work will serve to educate the Members of the Committee, the House at large, and the general public, as well.

We have invited former Vice President Gore, a leader on this issue, to appear before the Committee at a time and date that has yet to be determined. In addition, the Committee will examine the following issues:

1. **The Causes of Climate Change:** the Committee will examine the scientific evidence on the nature, extent, and rate of global warming and the link to anthropogenic emissions. Witnesses will include advocates of the full spectrum of scientific opinion.
2. **The Consequences of Climate Change:** the Committee will examine the scientific evidence of the effects of global warming, including its effect on glaciers, ocean levels, weather patterns, and human and animal habitats. While some scientists argue that the effects of global warming are approaching an irreversible “tipping point,” others maintain the risks are less certain and a measured approach is appropriate. The Committee will also examine how these changes to the earth’s systems will affect the

economy, agriculture, land use, insurance rates in coastal areas, food and water supplies, disease vectors, as well as other effects. Witnesses will include experts who can speak to the severity and timeline of these potential effects.

3. **State and Local Climate Change Initiatives:** the Committee will examine the actions being taken by State and local governments to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, including California's program, the Northeast States' utility program, and pledges undertaken by mayors to reduce emissions of their cities. Witnesses could include Governors Schwarzenegger (CA) and Richardson (NM), as well as other leading Governors and Mayors.
4. **Federal Climate Change Programs:** the Committee will examine Federal programs on climate change, including activities of the Council on Environmental Quality, the Department of Energy, and the Environmental Protection Agency, as well as the State Department's negotiations under the 1992 U.N. Framework Convention on Climate Change. The Committee will review Federal agencies' obligations and programs under current law, as well as the Administration's Asia-Pacific Partnership.
5. **Private Sector Climate Change Action:** the Committee will examine voluntary initiatives undertaken by U.S. companies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and the climate change requirements affecting U.S. companies operating internationally (including obligations pursuant to the Kyoto Treaty). Witnesses could include the Chicago Climate Exchange, Natsource, companies that have taken voluntary actions like Wal-Mart and General Electric, as well as non-governmental organizations working in partnership with industry.
6. **Technologies and Techniques to Reduce or Capture Greenhouse Gas Emissions:** the Committee will examine the current and future technologies and techniques to reduce or capture greenhouse gases, including renewable fuels, bio-fuels, nuclear energy, energy efficiency, advanced vehicle design, transportation planning, agricultural practices, and carbon sinks and sequestration. For each technology or technique, issues to be addressed will include potential greenhouse gas reductions, state of development, marketability, and economic impacts. Witnesses will include companies that have demonstrated commercial application of technologies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, experts on the projected emissions reduction potential of widespread adoption of available technologies, and experts on technological solutions under development.
7. **International Climate Change Policies and Experiences:** the Committee will examine current international efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, including lessons learned from administration of the Kyoto Treaty and related experience with emissions trading regimes. The Committee will review greenhouse gas emissions by developing countries and efforts to limit their emissions, and prospects for their assuming binding obligations in a post-Kyoto U.N. agreement

8. **Regulating Global Climate Change in the Transportation Sector:** These hearings will examine the existing CAFE system and ways to accomplish its objectives of reducing fuel consumption and emissions of carbon dioxide more effectively. This will include a thorough examination of how the current form of regulating vehicle fuel economy is working, how it can be improved, and how that would complement the regulation in other economic sectors of greenhouse gas emissions. In particular, it will include consideration of the following options: changing the measurement of fuel economy from miles per gallon to a carbon-based measurement, credit trading programs within the transportation sector and among other economic sectors, regulation the carbon content of motor fuels in tandem with vehicle emissions, new incentives for alternative fuels and advanced vehicle technologies, and ways to influence consumer behavior in addition to regulating the manufacture and sale of vehicles.

9. **Domestic Policy Options:** the Committee will examine potential options for mitigating climate change, including recommendations for regulatory frameworks and incentives. This series of hearings will delve into the potential environmental benefits, economic impact, and energy security implications of various alternatives. Invited witnesses will address economy-wide versus sector-specific cap-and-trade systems, whether emissions reductions should be based on carbon intensity or gross emissions, and how allowances could be allocated under a cap-and-trade system. In addition, we will ask witnesses to address the relationship between domestic and international regulatory obligations.

Although this is a comprehensive list, it is by no means a complete one. We welcome the thoughts and suggestions of all Members of the Committee as we move forward on this critical issue.