

**Statement of Rep. Henry A. Waxman
Committee on Government Reform Hearing on Global Warming
July 20, 2006**

I commend Chairman Davis for holding this hearing on global warming today.

Global warming is the greatest environmental challenge of our time, and we have a short window in which to act to prevent profound changes to the climate system. Unless we seize the opportunity to act now, our legacy to our children and grandchildren will be an unstable and dangerous planet.

I have been working to address the threat of global warming for many years. In 1992 – over a decade ago – I introduced the Global Climate Protection Act of 1992, which would have frozen U.S. emissions of greenhouse gases at 1990 levels in 2000. Had we acted then, the task before us today would be much easier.

Although we have long known the basic scientific facts of global warming, more recent findings have brought an even greater urgency to the problem.

Last year, the national science academies of eleven nations, including the United States, Great Britain, Russia, China, and India, issued a joint statement on the international scientific consensus on global warming. The academies unanimously confirmed that “climate change is real.” And they stated: “The scientific understanding of climate change is now sufficiently clear to justify nations taking prompt action. It is vital that all nations identify cost-effective steps that they can take now, to contribute to substantial and long-term reduction in net global greenhouse gas emissions.”

For decades, the tobacco industry mounted a disinformation campaign to create doubt about the dangers of smoking. Major energy industries are now trying the same approach about the consequences of global warming. But no one should be deceived. Global warming is real and it is an enormous threat to our nation.

Unfortunately, the Bush Administration – and Congress – have squandered opportunity after opportunity to address the problem of climate change. It’s much easier to rack up enormous debts than to be fiscally responsible. And it’s much easier to pretend global warming doesn’t exist than to face the reality of a dangerously overheating climate. But doing so is morally irresponsible. We are literally mortgaging our children’s future so we can continue consume unlimited amounts of fossil fuels.

It is impossible to catalogue this Administration’s record of failures on global warming in a five-minute statement. President Bush set a so-called target for greenhouse gas emissions that contemplates a 14% *increase* in emissions by 2012. The Administration has persistently tried to derail any effective international agreement to limit emissions of greenhouse gases. The Administration denies that greenhouse gases are pollutants. And it is even in court claiming that EPA has no authority to regulate global warming pollution.

We need to stop letting the coal companies, the oil companies, and the other special interests dictate our approach to global warming. Instead, we need to start listening to the scientists. That's what I tried to do earlier this year when I introduced the Safe Climate Act.

There are different approaches that can be taken to climate legislation. Some bills seek a symbolic recognition of the problem. Others are premised on what may be politically achievable in the near terms.

The Safe Climate Act is drafted on a different premise: It reflects what the science tells us we need to do to protect our children and future generations from irreversible and catastrophic global warming. The bill has aggressive requirements to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases, calling for an 80% reduction in emissions by 2050. But these are the reductions we need to preserve a safe climate for future generations. As Dr. James Hansen, among other scientists, has been telling us, we have about ten years to act to avoid being locked into irreversible global warming on a scale that will transform the planet.

And daunting though it may seem, these reductions are achievable with innovation and commitment. In fact, they will make our economy stronger and our nation safer.

I hope today's hearing will help this Committee, and this Congress, move forward to tackle the urgent problem of global warming. The scientists have been proven right on this issue time and again. If we continue to disregard their warnings, our children, and their children, will pay the price.