

Opening Statement
Rep. Bob Inglis, Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Energy and Environment
Geoengineering II: The Scientific Basis and Engineering Challenges

February 04, 2010

Good morning, and thank you for holding this hearing, Mr. Chairman. I look forward to discussing the scientific and engineering challenges related to geoengineering.

Last November, the full committee began our examination of geoengineering as a strategy to minimize the impacts of a warming climate. What we heard was theoretically promising: geoengineering may prove to be a low-cost intervention to buy us time to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions and limit our impact on the global climate system.

Still, we face considerable uncertainty. Dr. Rasch appropriately describes geoengineering as a “gamble” in his testimony. Is this a gamble worth trying? At this hearing, I hope to hear what steps we need to take to increase our understanding of geoengineering technologies and come one step closer to determining whether this is a viable option.

In particular, I hope that the witnesses will discuss what technologies, techniques, and capabilities must be developed to study and deploy geoengineering options, and what level of financial investment is required for these developments. I also hope the witnesses will discuss the gaps in our understanding of the climate system that may limit our ability to justify such large-scale intervention, and which alternatives may minimize further changes to the climate, resource cycles, or global ecology.

We also need to decide whether investments in geoengineering are worthwhile. There are a number of ecological, economic, and political uncertainties that also need to be addressed before these interventionist strategies are implemented. Moreover, there is a significant ethical question involved in deploying large-scale geoengineering techniques to forcibly change the climate in an effort to undo the damage we have already done. I hope to address these questions in a future hearing.

Again, thank you for holding this important hearing, Mr. Chairman. I look forward to hearing from the witnesses and I yield back the balance of my time.