Statement by Chairman Smith (R-Texas)
Using Technology To Address Climate Change

Chairman Smith: Today we will consider using technology to address climate change. We must ensure that our strategies take into account Americans' ability to develop innovations that will solve or mitigate challenges associated with climate change.

The climate is always changing, but what remains uncertain is the extent to which humans contribute to that change. What is certain is that human ingenuity will play a significant role in resolving future environmental issues.

Before we impose energy taxes or costly and ineffective government regulations, we should acknowledge the uncertainties that surround climate change research.

Natural climate variability contributes to this uncertainty. Solar cycles, volcanic activity, El Niño/La Niña temperature fluctuations and long term oceanic circulation patterns are all naturally occurring events that have a major impact on the climate.

Other unknowns such as the future of energy production and consumption also create uncertainty about future predictions.

Advanced nuclear reactors could change the landscape of both the developed world as well as developing economies.

Here's an example of an alarmist prediction not allowing for technological advances. A recent study found that the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's (IPCC) worst case scenario, which claimed further increasing emissions and temperatures, was based on outdated assumptions of coal usage.

These assumptions didn't anticipate the American shale gas revolution and further undercut the reliability of the IPCC's findings.

In the field of climate science, there is legitimate concern that scientists are biased in favor of reaching predetermined conclusions.

This inevitably leads to alarmist findings that are wrongfully reported as facts. Anyone who then questions the certainty of these findings is wrongly labeled a "denier."

We will hear today about how the U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) found that annual costs from worsening extreme weather events could increase as much as $112 billion annually by the year 2100.

The GAO relied on studies that used outdated heat mortality rate statistics before the use of air conditioning became prevalent. This is a simple adaptation that would have changed the study's results dramatically.

Predicting economic and environmental conditions hundreds of years from now while ignoring humans' capacity to innovate and adapt is irresponsible. It is also intentionally misleading—the ultimate "fake" news.

For instance, claiming that extreme weather will become more costly and deadly in the future as a result of climate change disregards inevitable advances in building materials and construction design.

Instead of relying on big government to solve climate change problems, we should look to technological innovations that increase resilience and decrease vulnerability to inevitable climate change.

For decades, climate policy has focused solely on emissions reduction. Overreaching and costly regulations like the Obama Clean Power Plan do little to reduce emissions. Climate mitigating technologies are much more likely to benefit the environment.

Similarly, non-binding international agreements with arbitrary temperature goals like the Paris Climate Agreement do not offer any realistic solutions and come at a high price to the taxpayer. Even if fully implemented by all 195 countries, which won't happen, it would only reduce global temperature by 0.3 degrees Fahrenheit over the next century (according to Dr. Bjorn Lomborg).

Technology is what provides the solution. Carbon emissions in the U.S. have decreased significantly over the last 10 years thanks to fracking technology that has boosted access to affordable and clean burning natural gas.

Throughout our history, technology has always led the way. All major breakthroughs in transportation, medicine, communication and space exploration have occurred because of scientific discoveries. Why wouldn't technology apply to climate change too?

Recognizing this, Microsoft founder Bill Gates and other high-tech giants recently put up $1 billion to find technology-related solutions. Together they launched Breakthrough Energy Ventures in 2016 to fund research into emerging energy and climate technologies. This is exactly the kind of innovative initiative we should encourage and support.

To solve climate change challenges, we first need to acknowledge the uncertainties that exist. Then we can have confidence that innovations and technology will enable us to mitigate any adverse consequences of climate change.

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