

OPENING STATEMENT
HONORABLE RALPH HALL
RANKING MEMBER
COMMITTEE ON SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY
Thursday, February 8, 2007

Good morning. I am glad the Chairman organized this hearing about the important topic of global warming, or as some prefer to call it, climate change. Let me start by thanking all of the witnesses for being here today. This will be a key issue in the 110th Congress and I hope I speak for all the Committee Members in saying we appreciate your time and the expertise that you can provide to our discussions.

There will be much debate this Congress about what policies the United States should adopt to deal with the potential impacts of climate change. While today's hearing is focused primarily on the latest science related to climate change, it is also a public forum and I expect Members will stray from the science and offer their opinions on various policy options that have been proposed. So, in that vein, let me set the record straight from the beginning. I am skeptical that mandatory regulation of greenhouse gasses, which some of my colleagues are promoting, is the best solution to the problem of climate change.

As a nation, we can't figure out how to write a cap and trade bill that does not cause an immediate spike in natural gas prices—a spike that endures for several years at the very least. The result will be the closing of more factories—steel, paper, lumber and many others. Gas price increases over the last six years, even without carbon regulation, have already caused millions of permanent lay-offs. Factories won't compete with utilities to buy gas. Rather, they will move to China and India where there are no pollution controls, inevitably worsening global emissions. In the meantime, Americans pay the price.

Clearly, we need to make the American people fully aware of the costs of mandatory emission caps. The discussion of mandatory caps comes down to one question—What is the maximum cost to the U.S. economy (in dollars per family) in a global warming bill, and what is the minimum effect on worldwide temperature our country is willing to accept at such cost? Of course, in order to fully answer that question we will need to factor into the equation the contribution, or lack of contribution,

of those countries who produce much of the pollution problems and seem unwilling to be a part of the solution. I would like to see this committee address this important equation in the near future.

We have an historic opportunity to use American innovation to help address this problem, and our committee is poised to offer competitive solutions. I would like to see more discussion of how technology, especially alternative energy technologies, can help address the issue of energy independence and climate change. I would also like to explore how we can encourage the development of technologies to use existing domestic resources more cleanly, effectively, and efficiently. In fact, later this morning we will consider an alternative energy technology bill on the House floor. There is no limit to American innovation. When we put our minds to solving a problem, we find answers that not only benefit our country, but also the world. We have always been leaders in technology—this should be no exception. I would like to see this committee promote the development of a wide range of new technologies to help America become energy independent while maintaining our competitive edge in the world economy. In the end, innovation can do a lot, but only so much. World powers must absolutely do their part. Without this, there can be no true success in solving the problem of global warming.

I look forward to hearing from our witnesses today and yield back the balance of my time.