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Statement of Rep. Henry A. Waxman, Ranking Minority Member Committee on Government Reform Hearing on “Climate Change Technology Research: Do we need Manhattan Project for the Environment?” September 21, 2006

Today’s hearing will begin to examine what policies Congress should consider for addressing the major threat of global warming.

We will hear from some of the nation’s leading experts on global warming and technology. They will present their views of how we move forward to take carbon out of the world’s economy.

I believe that almost all of us agree that global warming is occurring and action must be taken to avoid potentially catastrophic impacts to our country and the world. Our position reflects the scientific consensus, which only a small cadre of oil industry-funded propagandists are still denying it.

But despite this Committee’s interest, it would be a serious mistake for anyone watching this hearing to conclude that either the Administration or the Republican leadership in Congress is willing to tackle this problem. That’s why I’d like to take a moment to review the past six years.

President Bush and Vice President Cheney came into office determined to radically change the nation’s energy policy and that’s what they did. They crafted their policy with oil companies like ExxonMobil and refused to meet with consumer or environmental groups. Their plan bestowed countless favors on oil, coal, and other polluting industries. And it abandoned the President’s pledge to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. In fact, under the plan they developed, we’ve wasted precious years and exacerbated global warming.

During the last six years, there have been many constructive ideas put forward. For example:

- In July 2002, the Pew Center on Global Climate Change released a report on designing a climate-friendly energy policy.

- In July 2003, the Energy Future Coalition released an energy plan to fight global warming and address the political and economic security threat posed by our dependence on oil.
- In January 2004, the Apollo Alliance, a coalition of labor unions, environmental groups and other public interest groups, proposed an energy policy to modernize America's energy infrastructure and fight global warming.
- In April 2005, the Natural Resources Defense Council released a paper proposing an energy policy that would enhance our national security and reduce air and water pollution, while curbing global warming and creating jobs.

But these ideas to move us forward fell on deaf ears. The Republican Congress was simply uninterested in learning about the problem, let alone addressing it.

In December 2004, the bipartisan National Commission on Energy Policy released a plan to address the nation's long-term energy challenges, including oil dependence and global warming. The Commission was composed of Republicans and Democrats, industry and environmentalists, and they had figured out a way to come together. Yet the Chairman of the Energy and Commerce Committee would not even hold a hearing on the plan.

Recently, the Administration has begun to change its rhetoric on global warming. Unfortunately, it's only the rhetoric that is changing: they are sticking with their policy of denying the urgency of the problem and delaying any real action.

That has to change. We've already lost six years.

Today we're going to hear about the Administration's 100-year strategic plan. The name is impressive, but inside the covers, the plan has no timeline for actions and no goals for what we need to achieve. Thinking about technology research and development is very important. But by itself, it will do nothing to solve the problem.