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Subcommittee on Energy
House Committee on Science, Space, and Technology
Joint Hearing of the Environment and Energy Subcommittees

EPA Power Plant Regulations: Is the Technology Ready?

October 29, 2013

Thank you Chairman Stewart and Chairman Lummis for holding this hearing, and I also want to thank the witnesses for their testimony and for being here today.

Global climate change is one of the greatest challenges that we face. Last month, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change released a report which states with 95 percent certainty that human activities are responsible for climate change. This report was based on a rigorous review of thousands of scientific papers published by over 800 of the world's top scientists. The report also makes it clear that if we don't take steps to halt this change, the repercussions for humans and the environment will be catastrophic. We now need move forward and take the necessary steps to combat the warming of our planet before these impacts become inevitable.

We know that humans are impacting the climate in a number of ways – through emissions from the vehicles we drive, deforestation, and changes in agricultural practices among other things. But fossil fuel-based power plants are the biggest producers of greenhouse gasses, accounting for roughly a third of our total emissions last year.

I have repeatedly said that I am for an “all of the above” approach to energy production as we transition to clean energy technologies. But I have also made it clear that, as part of this “all of the above” approach, we must take steps to ensure that we are reducing greenhouse gas emissions and lessening their impact on human health, the environment, and the global climate. That is exactly what the proposed standards for new coal and natural gas burning plants aim to do, which is why I support their implementation. And, like Ms. Bonamici, I want to reinforce that these are only proposed standards for any **new** plants that may be built and will have **no** effect on existing plants, so we aren't going to see a wave of shuttered plants and massive layoffs as a result of their implementation. There are in-depth discussions underway about establishing standards for existing plants, which the EPA currently plans to propose next June, and there is ongoing, extensive engagement with all stakeholders to make sure that those standards will be flexible and won't have negative effects on state economies and job creation.

It has been my hope that Congress would act on this issue immediately. Unfortunately, too many of my colleagues choose to ignore the scientific consensus that human beings are playing a significant role in the warming of our planet, so I'm not expecting that much will be done legislatively to sufficiently address this issue anytime soon. The President made it clear in his State of the Union Address back in January that, in the absence of Congressional action, his Administration was going to take the lead in efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. These proposed standards reflect that commitment, and I fully support the President in this effort.

My colleagues on the other side of the aisle often say that our children and grandchildren are going to be left holding the bag if we don't reduce our deficits and the national debt, and I agree that it would be irresponsible of us not to take serious steps to put our fiscal house in order. Similarly, future generations will be the ones who will suffer if we don't take immediate and meaningful steps to confront climate change, but in this case – as the global scientific community has made clear again and again – the consequences of our inaction will be far more severe.