



COMMITTEE ON
ENERGY & COMMERCE
DEMOCRATS
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Pallone Remarks at Hearing on Wildfires

“When are Republicans going to stop actively pursuing policies that make the problem worse?”

Washington, D.C. – *Energy and Commerce Ranking Member Frank Pallone, Jr. (D-NJ) delivered the following opening remarks today at a Subcommittee on Environment hearing on “Air Quality Impacts of Wildfires: Mitigation and Management Strategies.”*

It has been a year now since this Subcommittee last held a hearing on wildfires. Since that time, the same regions of the country are suffering due to the large number and size of forest fires causing tremendous damage. This is once again particularly destructive to western states. We’ve all seen the devastating images of lives lost and homes destroyed. These extreme wildfires are also creating poor air quality in states far away from the fires. Last month, the National Weather Service found that smoke from western wildfires has spread as far as New England.

These wildfires are tragic, but they should not be a surprise. For years, scientists have warned that climate change was very likely going to contribute to the increased fire intensity and frequency that we are seeing now. That is exactly what we are seeing today, and we are not going to improve this situation by only looking at forest management or timber harvesting practices. If this Congress wants to truly address the increase in extreme wildfires, we must act to slow the global warming that is driving changes in climate and weather patterns.

Unfortunately, the Trump Administration and Congressional Republicans refuse to address climate change and have instead pushed policies that will exacerbate our climate problems. Here’s my list of President Trump’s most significant climate actions:

- He pulled the U.S. out of the Paris Agreement, giving up our spot as a global leader and turning his back on our allies;
 - He proposed to replace the commonsense Clean Power Plan with a Dirty Power Scam that lets polluters off the hook. EPA even admits this proposal will result in 1,400 more premature deaths every year;
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- President Trump proposed to relax standards for fuel efficiency in vehicles, hurting consumers and ensuring more climate-changing substances are emitted into the air;
- He doubled down on a loophole in the Clean Air Act that allows more inefficient and polluting heavy duty trucks on our roadways;
- And just this week, Trump relaxed controls on methane pollution from oil and gas operations and landfills;
- President Trump has also blocked all Federal agencies from considering or acknowledging the costs associated with climate change when making decisions;
- He has proposed to cut funds for energy efficiency programs and support for renewable energy;
- And, he continues to threaten to abuse emergency authorities to subsidize the oldest and least efficient coal plants in the country.

President Trump and his Administration are doing everything possible to increase emissions and block any attempt to slow the rate of climate change. The result is rising seas, extreme weather events, severe drought, and –of course– extended and intense fire seasons. These are costing lives, destroying property and infrastructure, and costing us billions in disaster assistance. And, as we sit here, the Southeast is about to be hit by another powerful hurricane, devastating more communities. A new report from researchers at Stony Brook University and Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory finds that Hurricane Florence is about 50 miles wider as a result of climate change. That means the hurricane could result in 50 percent more rainfall.

Yet, Republicans refuse to address climate change. Even here today the focus is not where it should be. How many more of these events do we need before Republicans join us in taking decisive action to combat climate change? When are Republicans going to stop actively pursuing policies that make the problem worse?

If we are serious about stemming the terrible growth of the forest fire season, as well as these other natural disasters, we need to abandon the disaster that is the Trump Administration climate policy. And we need to do it immediately.

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