

House Energy & Commerce Committee


Ranking Member

Republicans

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CONTACT: Press office
202-225-3641

Barton: Need to Understand Global Warming Before Trying to Fix It

'No nation in the world ... when faced with a choice of poverty or a better standard of living for their population, has chosen poverty'

WASHINGTON – U.S. Rep. Joe Barton, R-Texas, ranking member of the House Energy and Commerce Committee, issued the following statement today as part of an Energy and Air Quality Subcommittee hearing entitled, “Administration Perspectives on United Nations Climate Change Conference in Bali:”

“Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It’s good to have this subcommittee back in action. We started off with a flurry during the first session and along around the summertime, it kind of went into hibernation. So we’re glad to have you back on the front lines.

“I want to welcome some people here today. I first want to welcome my new ranking member, Mr. Upton. Mr. Upton has been on the committee for quite a number of years. He has made his major contribution as the past subcommittee chairman and ranking member of the Telecommunications and the Internet Subcommittee but he has switched over to Energy and Air Quality with the departure of the former speaker, Mr. Hastert. He’s got big shoes to fill – Mr. Hastert, Mr. Hall, who’s now ranking member of the Science Committee. I’m very, very happy to have nominated Mr. Upton to this position.

“I also welcome our witness, Mr. Connaughton. He and I have had an ongoing relationship and a number of discussions over I-don’t-know-how-many years. He just got back from Bali and we’re going to hear his insights. I think it is safe to say that Jim Connaughton is one of the most knowledgeable on the issue for the hearing scheduled today, which is global warming and climate change.

“We’ve had a lot of hearings about global warming in the last several years. I’m still not convinced that the science and the economics of the issue are settled. I know a lot of people want to move on and look at solutions, but I don’t think we can have a very good chance to develop an optimal solution if we don’t really understand the problem. There are a large number of skeptics still out there about what causes global warming and what mankind can do about it. I hope some of your hearings this spring touch on that. As I’ve said before, when we get ready to consider legislation, I have four issues, or goals, that I want to try to meet.

“I do want to keep electricity plentiful and affordable in America. I want to keep our transportation sector viable. It’s interesting to know in the euphoria over passing a CAFE increase, at the Detroit auto show this week our manufacturers said that legislation, if implemented, is going to raise the price of an American vehicle approximately \$6,000 per car. I want someone to tell me how that helps our economy when the price of automobiles goes up \$6,000 per vehicle.

“I want to keep our natural gas prices affordable because many Americans heat their homes with natural gas, cook their meals and we still have an industry that uses natural gas. And obviously, I want to protect American jobs. We can have the most perfect global warming bill in the world and it’s not going to do us any good if we raise the unemployment rate five or 10 points.

“You’ve indicated that you want to introduce a cap-and-trade bill sometime this spring, Mr. Chairman. I hope we can dissuade you from that position. The great experiment in Europe with cap-and-trade so far is an absolute failure. There’s no other way to put it. The prices their economies are paying is going up and emissions are going up, too. Now, their apologists say that that’s only because they don’t have it just right. But I predict that no matter how much they tinker with it, when you’re trying to cap-and-trade something as ubiquitous as CO2, most of which is not manmade, it’s folly, it’s an impossible situation. Hopefully we’ll really get into the details of just what a cap-and-trade program would look like here in America.

“I also want to make a point that a number of other people have made. We’re in a global economy. We are the world’s largest economy but if we do some things that are very draconian on our emissions here in the United States and really all it does is cost us jobs, I’m very skeptical that the rest of the world is going to follow suit. There’s no nation in the world, in the last thousand years, when faced with a choice of poverty or a better standard of living for their population, has chosen poverty. And it is absolutely ludicrous, in my opinion, for us to ask China and India and Brazil and Mexico and all of the developing world to adopt some of these very, very stringent controls on CO2 when if they do that, it’s an absolute recipe for making sure that their people don’t move forward and don’t have a better standard of living. We made that choice beginning in the late 1800s and all through the 1900s as we electrified America, put in our transportation system, created an economy literally based on the automobile. The result has been the highest standard of living the world has ever known. So it’s silly for us to ask the rest of the world to not move forward as we moved forward in the last 125 years.

“So, Mr. Chairman, I’m glad to have this subcommittee back in action. I do think global warming is a real issue. I do think that to the extent we can do things that make economic sense and environmental sense, we should try to move forward. But I do not believe that we should like lemmings just jump off the cliff in the name of political correctness. With that, Mr. Chairman, I very, very respectfully yield back.”

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