

Opening Statement

Select Committee on Energy Independence and Global Warming

Clearing the Smoke: Understanding the Impacts of Black Carbon Pollution

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There's so much controversy about how to confront climate change that sometimes there seems to be no common ground. However, by taking a realistic approach to black carbon, we can have a positive effect on the environment without breaking the bank, which is something that both Democrats and Republicans should support.

Black carbon, which is essentially soot, doesn't get the attention that carbon dioxide receives. It's too bad, because more focus on black carbon would likely produce immediate results for the environment without requiring the types of regulations that stifle the economy.

Scientists are learning that black carbon is one of the leading contributors to climate change. Most global emissions of black carbon come from energy-related combustion and the burning of biomass. By

coating both the air and the planet's surface with soot, black carbon absorbs heat at a dangerous rate. But unlike carbon dioxide, which hangs in the atmosphere for decades, black carbon lingers for only days at a time. It's also a lot easier for society to address the emissions of black carbon. There are already a number of ways to reduce these emissions without relying on the cost-prohibitive technologies that CO₂ regulations will require.

Most of the world's black carbon is produced in Asia. Surprisingly, when it comes to black carbon, the U.S. isn't cast as the bad guy, as North America produces less than Europe, South America and Africa. But much of the black carbon produced in the developing world could be offset with simple technology and techniques. Improved farming and forestry policies would go a long way towards reducing this soot. So would cleaner-burning stoves, which are already readily available, and could be cheaply deployed in many of the developing nations where dirty, inefficient stoves are commonly used.

It will be a lot cheaper to buy clean stoves for developing nations than to implement draconian carbon dioxide regulations. As Congress struggles over how to confront climate change, black carbon reductions, targeted investments in research and development, and improved transmission

are cost-effective options that can have large impacts without crippling our economy.

I want to welcome Dr. Drew Shindell of the NASA Goddard Institute for Space Studies, who will talk about the immediate impact that could result from cleaning up black carbon emissions. Hybrid truck legislation that I have introduced would also help address black carbon. Diesel engines are a primary source of black carbon, and since most trucks use diesel, reducing fuel use in trucks would reduce both CO₂ and black carbon emissions. My bill would create a grant program in the Department of Energy to fund research and development of hybrid truck technology.

This is one approach that's simple and affordable. There are many others and I hope today's hearing leads to more understanding of this problem and its solutions.

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