

Opening Statement for Edward J. Markey (D-MA)  
"Energy and Global Warming Solutions for Vulnerable Communities"  
Select Committee on Energy Independence and Global Warming  
October 18, 2007

When we think of the communities most vulnerable to global warming, images of physical devastation come to mind – Gulf Coast cities washed away by increasingly intense hurricanes, Alaskan villages slipping into the ocean without sea ice to protect them from winter storms, and low-lying islands and coastal areas slowly losing ground to the rising sea level. These physical vulnerabilities are serious, but as we will hear from our witnesses today, communities around the world face a variety of challenges from global warming and our dependence on fossil fuels.

The price of oil is once again breaking records. With the American economy is already shaky from the mortgage crisis, some analysts believe a prolonged oil spike could tip the economy over into a recession, sending America reeling from oil speculators, OPEC and oil addiction. Rising oil and gasoline prices affect all American families, but it is especially acute for the working poor. For a family owning one car making \$20,000 a year, \$3 per gallon gasoline consumes almost 9 percent of its annual income alone, adding in their other energy costs raises their fossil fuel bill even further.

And while we are paying more for fossil fuels, the global warming caused by their combustion can undermine parts of the economy in the United States and around the world. A University of Maryland report released earlier this week found that economic impacts of climate change will occur throughout the United States and that the negative impacts will outweigh the benefits for most sectors that provide essential goods and services to society. Today we will learn how the health of the economy of the Maldives is dependent on the health of their coral reefs.

Our reliance on fossil fuels may be hard on the wallet, but the costs do not stop there. Over 70 percent of African-Americans and 50 percent of Latinos live in counties that violate federal air pollution standards, and unsurprisingly they have higher prevalence of asthma and other debilitating lung diseases. This adds up to substantial costs in terms of health care and lost days at school and work.

Just as our reliance on fossil fuels poses physical, economic and health threats, the alternatives will reduce pollution harmful to the health of people and the planet and will create new jobs and energy savings for consumers. This is precisely why the New Direction Democratic Congress has put together an Energy Bill, which no longer looks to fossil fuels as the favored fuels, but rather leads us in a new direction – towards renewable electricity, energy efficiency and biofuels.

In combination with its counterpart in the Senate, by 2030, this new energy policy has the potential to:

- save more than twice the amount of oil we currently import from the Persian Gulf and

- reduce U.S. global warming pollution by up to 40 percent of what we must do to save the planet.
- create over 1.5 million jobs.

By including Rep. Solis's green jobs legislation, the energy bill will also provide the tools and resources to train the workers needed to bring the green revolution to all communities. This fall Congress has an opportunity to pass an energy bill that will make a significant contribution to our global warming goals, reduce the energy and health bills of American families and create jobs in communities that need them the most.

We are already seeing the effects of our intertwined energy and global warming challenges in vulnerable communities across our nation and world. However, this crisis will not exclusively target our most vulnerable. They may be the first to feel the impacts, but in no way will they be the last. Without strong and consistent energy and global warming policies that look to improve our nation and world's energy and environmental future as a whole, we will find all of our communities vulnerable.

Today, we have an opportunity to hear from representatives of communities already feeling the impact of global warming and our reliance on fossil fuels and a chance to learn from them what policies would most help their communities meet these challenges. I look forward to the testimony of our witnesses.