

ONE HUNDRED THIRTEENTH CONGRESS  
**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**

COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND COMMERCE

2125 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING  
WASHINGTON, DC 20515-6115

Majority (202) 225-2927  
Minority (202) 225-3641

July 30, 2014

The Honorable Fred Upton  
Chairman  
Committee on Energy and Commerce  
2125 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Ed Whitfield  
Chairman  
Subcommittee on Energy and Power  
Committee on Energy and Commerce  
2125 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Upton and Chairman Whitfield:

The Environmental Protection Agency recently released an important new report, *Climate Change Indicators in the United States 2014*, which highlights the consequences of climate change for public health and the environment.<sup>1</sup> We request that you hold a hearing on this report so that members of the committee may be better informed of the impacts of climate change on our nation.

The report is based on years of observed data and focuses on 30 indicators of climate change in the United States. Consistent with the National Climate Assessment, this report emphasizes that climate change is already occurring and affecting the health of Americans and the environment. Seven of the top ten warmest years on record have occurred since 1998, and dangerous heat waves have become more frequent.<sup>2</sup> Janet McCabe, Acting Assistant Administrator for EPA's Office of Air and Radiation says, "These indicators make it clear that climate change is a serious problem and is happening now here in the U.S. and around the world."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, *Climate Change Indicators in the United States 2014*, Third edition, (May, 2014) (online at [www.epa.gov/climatechange/science/indicators/](http://www.epa.gov/climatechange/science/indicators/))

<sup>2</sup> *Id.* at 27

<sup>3</sup> EPA News Release, (May 28, 2014) (online at [www2.epa.gov/newsroom/news-releases](http://www2.epa.gov/newsroom/news-releases))

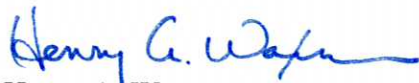
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The report shows that global warming is hurting Americans' health in several ways. The incidence of Lyme disease—the most common vector born disease in America—has approximately doubled since 1991, in part due to climate change, which expands the range of tick habitat.<sup>4</sup> Twenty six percent of Americans are sensitive to ragweed, and its pollen season has lengthened by around 20 days in some northern regions of the country due to delayed first frosts.<sup>5</sup> This makes Americans more vulnerable to hay fever and asthma attacks, especially among the young and elderly.<sup>6</sup> Dangerous storms also threaten to inundate coastal communities and risk lives. Cyclone intensity has risen over the past 20 years with six of the ten most active years since the 1950s occurring during that period.<sup>7</sup>

The environmental impacts of climate change are vast and will challenge not only wildlife and ecosystems, but our way of life. Snowpack is a key source of drinking water, hydropower, and irrigation for millions of people in the West, but a warmer climate is threatening snow pack in many areas of the country. According to the report, “From 1955 to 2013, snow pack declined at about three-fourths of the sites measured.”<sup>8</sup> Wildfires put firefighters' lives at risk, reduce air quality, and threaten to destroy property and forests. According to the report, the area of land burned by wildfires annually has increased since the 1980s and nine of the ten years with the most land burned have occurred since 2000, coinciding with many of the warmest years on record.<sup>9</sup>

This report follows on the heels of two other major reports—the third National Climate Assessment and the fifth Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change Assessment—that also demonstrate the urgent need for action to address the increasing threat of climate change. We urge you to hold a hearing on the latest climate science to examine the impacts of climate change on public health and the environment.

Sincerely,



Henry A. Waxman  
Ranking Member



Bobby L. Rush  
Subcommittee on Energy and Power  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Energy and Power

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<sup>4</sup> U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, *Climate Change Indicators in the United States 2014*, Third edition, at 78 (May, 2014) (online at [www.epa.gov/climatechange/science/indicators/](http://www.epa.gov/climatechange/science/indicators/))

<sup>5</sup> *Id.* at 82

<sup>6</sup> *Id.* at 82

<sup>7</sup> *Id.* at 42

<sup>8</sup> *Id.* at 70

<sup>9</sup> *Id.* at 86