



COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Hearing Statement of Emergency Preparedness, Response, and Recovery Subcommittee Chairman Doanld M. Payne, Jr. (D-NJ)

Assessing the Homeland Security Impacts of a Changing Climate

April 9, 2019

I'm especially glad that this subcommittee hearing is leading the Committee on Homeland Security's efforts on climate change this Congress. The last time this Committee held a noticed activity on climate change, it was in 2015, when Republicans held a hearing entitled "Examining DHS's Misplaced Focus on Climate Change." Let me be clear: climate change is here. It's happening. The scientific evidence is there, and it is a threat to our security. If continued unchecked, the effects of climate change will have a devastating impact on nearly every aspect of American life. Scientists from all over the world are clear, if we don't start taking steps to address this issue, it will soon be too late.

As climate change continues to make extreme weather events worse, our critical infrastructure will be at-risk of failing, a terrifying prospect for our homeland security. That risk is increasing, according to researchers at the Rand Corporation, as we see stronger disasters and an underinvestment in resiliency. It's not just infrastructure, but also healthcare systems, food production, military installations commerce, and so much more that is at-risk. All things that are critical to our homeland security. With the FEMA workforce already stretched too thin to adequately respond to current disasters, there are serious questions as to how they will be able to respond as climate change intensifies hurricanes and other disasters. However, instead of trying to incorporate climate change in how it plans for the future, FEMA has stripped any mention of it from their 2018-2022 strategic plan, which guides the agency's actions over the next few years.

But you don't have to look far into the future to see how climate change is affecting us. It's no coincidence that 18 of the 19 warmest years on record have occurred since 2001. The world is getting warmer, and that's a fact. Or, take, for instance, Hurricane Harvey, one of the most devastating storms in recent memory. Studies have shown that the rainfall during Hurricane Harvey, which was just over 60 inches, was as much as 38 percent higher than would be expected in a world without climate change. This isn't some far off phenomenon, this is affecting real people right now. The thousands of residents in and around Houston who dealt with flooding, and whose lives are still being put back together.

In my own home state of New Jersey, we are seeing some of the most intense warming trends in the country. In an analysis of data from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, New Jersey is one of the top three fastest warming states in the country. Yet, despite these dire warnings, the Federal government is doing nothing to try and stop the effects of climate change. In fact, it is making the problem worse by rolling back rules and regulations aimed at reducing greenhouse gas emissions and rolling back smart building rules to protect infrastructure from floods. And despite controlling the House for the past 8 years, Republicans in Congress did nothing to address, what scientists agree, will be the devastating effects of climate change.

Today, we have an expert panel of witnesses that can discuss the science of climate change, why it matters to our homeland security, and the effects on children, who are a particularly vulnerable population when faced with extreme weather events. I look forward to hearing their views on this topic.

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