



COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY

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Subcommittee Hearing Statement of Chairman Bennie G. Thompson (D-MS)

Examining Climate Change: A Threat to the Homeland

June 8, 2021

Climate change is very real and creating more frequent and extreme natural disasters. Extreme weather and its accompanying negative impacts make climate change one of the biggest threats to our homeland.

For evidence of the impacts of climate change, you can look to the 2020 Atlantic hurricane season, which was the most active and the fifth-costliest Atlantic hurricane season on record. The 2020 Atlantic hurricane season was so active that we ran out of names and proceeded to use the Greek alphabet. Also in 2020, we witnessed devastating California wildfires. By the end of the year, we had nearly 10,000 fires that had burned through more than 4 million acres, making 2020 the largest wildfire season on record in California.

We are also seeing the impacts of climate change in my home state. Over the past year, Mississippi has dealt with several catastrophic weather events and, as a result, the state has received six storm-related Major Declarations and five Emergency Declarations. The damage from these horrific storms has caused more than \$100 million in damages. In addition to the cost of extreme weather events, recent disasters are shining a light on long-standing inequities in which low-income and underserved communities suffer disproportionate impacts of climate change. These communities will continue to suffer disproportionately from severe weather unless we make equity a priority in addressing climate change.

Policymakers cannot afford to ignore climate change as it threatens our infrastructure, agriculture, economy, healthcare, population, and so much more. For example, Federal Reserve Chairman Jerome Powell acknowledged that the climate crisis “could impact the broader economy, including inflation, jobs and the financial sector.” America lost years of progress on addressing climate change due to the Trump Administration’s outright refusal to accept science and its work to dismantle climate science programs across the Federal government.

I am proud that the Biden Administration is taking climate change seriously. President Biden is committed to rebuilding our communities by investing in preparation for extreme weather events while also ensuring that policies tackling the climate crisis are more inclusive.

We must be bold in addressing climate change. We need to make critical investments in mitigation and adaption investments today, to reduce damage from future extreme weather occurrences. I hope to hear from our witnesses today about how we can take bold steps to combat the ongoing climate crisis. I look forward to working with the Biden Administration and my colleagues in supporting communities in our fight to combat climate change and build stronger, more resilient communities.

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