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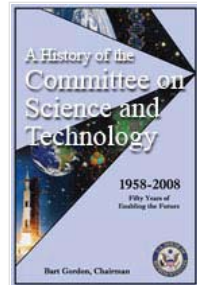
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Hearing :: 11/5/2009 :: **Geoengineering: Assessing the Implications of Large-Scale Climate Intervention**

**Opening Statement By Chairman Bart Gordon**

Good morning. I would like to welcome everyone to today's hearing of the House Committee on Science and Technology entitled, "Geoengineering: Assessing the Implications of Large-Scale Climate Intervention."

I believe this hearing marks the first time that a Congressional Committee has undertaken a serious review of proposals for climate engineering. That is not surprising; it is a very complex and controversial subject that has seen little formal debate in the U.S.

Geoengineering carries with it a tremendous range of uncertainties, ethical and political concerns, and the potential for catastrophic environmental side-effects. But we are faced with the stark reality that the climate is changing, and the onset of impacts may outpace the world's political and economic ability to avoid them.

Therefore, we should accept the possibility that certain climate engineering proposals may merit consideration and, as a starting point, review research and development as appropriate. At its best geoengineering might only buy us some time. But if we want to know the answers we have to first ask the tough questions. Today we begin what I believe will be a long conversation.

In fact, my intention is for this hearing to serve as the introduction to the concept of climate engineering. Over the next 8 months the Committee will hold two to three more hearings to explore underlying science, engineering, ethical, economic and governance concerns in further detail.

I am pleased to announce that this will be part of inter-parliamentary project with our counterparts in the United Kingdom House of Commons Science and Technology Committee. When members of the Commons Committee visited us last spring the Chairman, Phil Willis, proposed that we work together on issues of common interest. Geoengineering has decidedly global implications, and research should be considered in the context of a transparent international process.

Yesterday the Commons committee voted to undertake a parallel effort to examine the domestic and international regulatory frameworks that may be applicable to geoengineering. We will be in close contact with them, sharing the findings from our own efforts. When they complete their work in the spring the Chairman of the Committee will testify before us in a hearing on domestic and international governance issues.

Before we begin this discussion today I want to make something very clear upfront – my decision to hold this hearing should not in any way be misconstrued as an endorsement of any geoengineering activity, and the timing has nothing to do with the pending negotiations in Copenhagen. I know we run the risk of misleading headlines.

However, this subject requires very careful examination, and will likely only be considered as a potential stopgap tool in a much wider package of climate change mitigation and adaptation strategies. It will require years of internationally-coordinated research for us to better understand our options, examine the impacts, and know if any activity warrants deployment. In the meantime nothing should stop us from pursuing aggressive long-term domestic and global strategies for achieving deep reductions in greenhouse gas emissions.

This issue is too important for us to keep our heads in the sand. We must get ahead of geoengineering before it gets ahead of us, or worse, before we find ourselves in a climate emergency with inadequate information as to the full range of options. As Chairman of the committee of jurisdiction, I feel a responsibility to begin a public dialogue and develop a record on geoengineering.

With that, I look forward to a healthy discussion, and I yield to the distinguished Ranking Member, Mr. Hall for his opening statement.

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