



**THE SELECT COMMITTEE ON  
ENERGY INDEPENDENCE AND GLOBAL WARMING**

**The Greenland Ice Sheet:  
Global Warming's Impacts on the Arctic Region  
August 10, 2010**

**Chairman Edward Markey  
Opening Statement**

Last week an ice sheet covering 100 square miles broke off Greenland.

This giant ice island is more than four times the size of Manhattan. It is the largest piece of Arctic ice to break free in nearly half a century.

This event follows the warmest six months on record, which is on the heels of the warmest decade on record.

Scientists, skeptical by both nature and training, always urge a dose of caution when looking at any one event as evidence of climate change. This level of professional skepticism is what makes the overwhelming scientific consensus that climate change is real and caused by man all the more powerful.

Scientists have warned us that climate change will result in increased melting of glaciers and polar ice, more frequent and intense heat waves and wildfires, and increased draught and flooding. With that prognosis in mind, let's review some of what has happened during this hottest 6 months on record.

Russia is suffering both the worst heat wave AND the worst draught since record-keeping began more than 130 years ago. This brutal combination is now killing 700 people a day in Moscow alone. More than 600 wildfires have scorched more than 465,000 acres and destroyed thousands of homes. 25 million acres of grain production have failed, causing Prime Minister Putin to ban all exports of grain.

The extreme floods slamming much of Asia may prove to be the biggest humanitarian disaster in memory. In Pakistan alone, 13 million people are affected.

And Americans up and down the Eastern Seaboard have endured day-after-day of record-breaking temperatures. Mega storms and floods have rocked many regions of the country, including my home state of Massachusetts, where we had two “50-year” storms in the course of two weeks this past March.

Take a step back from these individual pieces and we see a mosaic that could not be clearer. Our world is becoming less hospitable with every passing year.

The melting of the Greenland Ice sheet is but one harbinger of the many changes to come. I am delighted to have a panel of experts here before us today who can help us understand why a massive piece of ice broke free from Greenland last week, and how it fits in with the deeper and more disturbing phenomenon of arctic warming.

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