



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

Statement of Chairman Edward J. Markey (D-MA)

**Hearing on “The Foundations of Climate Science”
Select Committee on Energy Independence and Global Warming
May 6, 2010**

All eyes are focused on the economic and environmental disaster unfolding in the Gulf of Mexico. The BP oil spill is causing an immediate human and ecological tragedy. The spill is yet another dramatic example of why we must find alternatives to oil. The American people are desperate for safe, clean energy alternatives. Solutions that add jobs, end our oil addiction and heed the warnings of climate scientists who have called for pollution reductions.

Eleven people tragically lost their lives in the BP rig explosion. For the past week, an estimated 5,000 barrels of oil a day has been leaking into the ocean. As a result, the Gulf Coast’s fishing, seafood, and tourism industries are bracing for the worst. Wildlife refuges and marine sanctuaries remain in harms way. Congress will keep a vigilant eye on BP’s efforts to stop the leak and clean up this environmental mess.

However, the visible oil is not the only carbon pollution we have to worry about. Once gasoline is burned in our cars and trucks, carbon dioxide is released into the atmosphere. We can see the oil slick in the Gulf from space, but it is the build up of invisible carbon dioxide in our atmosphere that is preventing heat from escaping back into space. Even as carbon dioxide’s concentration in the atmosphere has been accumulating, so has our scientific understanding of its effect and impacts. Based on over 150 years of scientific research, a clear picture has emerged of rising temperatures, increased droughts, severe rainstorms, and an acidifying ocean.

Those who deny global warming point to past uncertainties that have been refuted. They ignore the overwhelming observational evidence that the increased levels of heat-trapping pollution are already warming the planet. Instead of trying to understand the science, they use stolen emails about analysis of tree rings in Siberia to turn an honest discussion into a Russian Tree Ring Circus. Or they manufacture a cooling trend by cherry picking a few years out of a longer record of warming temperatures.

While the deniers hope to confuse the public, the real world consequences of inaction mount. Over the weekend, killer storms blew through Tennessee, Mississippi and Kentucky. In Nashville, nearly 13 inches of rain fell in just over two days time – almost doubling the previous record that fell in the aftermath of a hurricane in 1979.

These storms follow the wettest March on record in Boston. Two 50-year storms occurred within 2 weeks of each other. The National Guard was mobilized. Hundreds of

people were evacuated from their homes. The region suffered millions of dollars in damages.

No single rainstorm can be attributed to climate change. Nor can a snowstorm disprove its existence. But the underlying science and the observed trends do point to more extreme weather events, especially heavy precipitation events because a warmer atmosphere can hold more moisture.

Extreme rainfall is just one of the consequences of the carbon pollution we are releasing into the air. Our witnesses today will explain how science has revealed this unseen pollution for what it is and discuss the very real consequences of its continuing accumulation in the atmosphere.

As we approach summer, our clean energy debate needs to acknowledge what many would like to deny. Our dependence on oil carries with it national security, economic and environmental risks. As gas prices rise and the oil slick spreads, perhaps we will finally acknowledge that we cannot drill our way to independence. We have less than 3 percent of proven oil reserves. Perhaps we can also acknowledge the basic facts that have been known for decades—increasing carbon pollution in the atmosphere is warming the planet and that the only way to put a halt to such warming is to move to clean energy solutions.