



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

**Opening Statement for Edward J. Markey (D-MA)
"Building U.S. Resilience to Global Warming Impacts"
Select Committee on Energy Independence and Global Warming
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We all remember the tragic consequences of Hurricane Katrina – the breached levees, water-filled streets, and families seeking shelter in the Superdome. While many individuals courageously responded to this disaster, government leadership failed the people of New Orleans when they needed help most. Katrina foreshadows the consequences of climate change if we do not make the necessary preparations.

Since then, scientists have shown that the warming of our climate system from emissions of heat-trapping gases – from our tailpipes and smokestacks – is unequivocal.

We face not only an increasing number of strong storms, but also many permanent alterations that will affect people throughout the country. Coastal cities like Boston will be at risk of inundation from sea level rise, which is accelerating as our oceans warm and our polar ice caps melt. Alaskan villages are finding the land they call home literally melting out from underneath them as the permafrost thaws. In the West, our shrinking mountain snowpack strains our water resource systems. Throughout this country, our farms are threatened by rising temperatures, water scarcity, and pests. For a projected 2.2 degree (Fahrenheit) rise in temperatures over the next 30 years, we can expect significant declines in the crops that make up the base of our food system.

The past is no longer a predictor of the future. We need to develop our resilience in order to safeguard our health, our environment, our economy, and our national security. We need to develop a comprehensive strategy to adapt, conduct world-class climate research, and coordinate federal, state, and local action.

Now, some will argue that we should not address the root of the problem and only address its symptoms – that we should only adapt to climate change and not address global warming pollution. We cannot just address the symptoms. When someone has a heart attack, the doctor prescribes medication to help prevent another attack and puts the patient on a low-fat diet to improve long-term health. Our country experienced a heart attack in New Orleans and we must now develop BOTH the institutional medication to manage the impacts of warming AND ALSO shift society to a low-carbon energy regimen for a healthy climate. Just as we cannot medicate our way out of heart problems, we cannot simply adapt our way out of global warming.

We have taken the first steps to cut carbon pollution and build resilience to global warming impacts. Earlier this year, the House passed the Waxman-Markey American Clean Energy and Security Act, which will set us on a pollution cutting path and at the same time create millions of new jobs, making America the global leader of the clean energy economy. The Act will also create a National Climate Service that will provide decision-makers with the very best climate information and help federal agencies and states adapt to the dangerous consequences of climate change.

In a new report that I requested, the Government Accountability Office assesses the current steps our country is taking to address the impacts of global warming. They find that federal efforts thus far have been largely ad hoc. To effectively address the impacts, we need a strategic plan that sets our priorities, improves the information available to decision-makers, and clarifies the roles and responsibilities of federal, state, and local governments.

I look forward to the testimony of our witnesses and hearing from them how Congress can help build our resilience to global warming.