

**U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
COMMITTEE ON SCIENCE, SPACE, AND TECHNOLOGY**

**HEARING CHARTER**

*Paris Climate Promise: A Bad Deal for America*

Tuesday, February 2, 2016  
10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.  
2318 Rayburn House Office Building

**PURPOSE**

The Committee on Science, Space, and Technology will hold a hearing entitled *Paris Climate Promise: A Bad Deal for America* on Tuesday, February 2, 2016, in Room 2318 of the Rayburn House Office Building. The hearing will examine the various scientific, economic, and other policy issues surrounding the United States' pledge at the recent United Nations-led effort to curtail greenhouse gas emissions.

**WITNESS LIST**

- **Mr. Steve Eule**, Vice President for Climate and Technology, U.S. Chamber of Commerce
- **Dr. John Christy**, Professor of Atmospheric Science and Director of the Earth System Science Center, University of Alabama in Huntsville
- **Dr. Andrew Steer**, President and CEO, World Resources Institute
- **Mr. Steven Groves**, The Bernard and Barbara Lomas Senior Research Fellow, Margaret Thatcher Center for Freedom, The Heritage Foundation

**BACKGROUND**

The United Nations Paris Climate Change Conference (COP21) concluded in December 2015. COP21's objective was "to achieve a legally binding and universal agreement on...keeping global warming below 2°C."<sup>1</sup> It is anticipated that a signing ceremony will occur at the United Nations by April 2016.

In November 2014, the Obama Administration announced that the U.S. would reduce its economy-wide greenhouse gas emissions by 26%-28% by 2025 compared to a 2005 baseline, and reiterated this pledge this past March to the United Nations through the submission of an "Intended Nationally Determined Contribution (INDC)."<sup>2</sup> In addition to a pledge to reduce such emissions, then-Secretary of State Hillary Clinton in 2009 pledged to raise \$100 billion annually

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.cop21paris.org/about/cop21>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2015/03/31/fact-sheet-us-reports-its-2025-emissions-target-unfccc>

for a Green Climate Fund to aid developing countries.<sup>3</sup> The COP21 agreement would require the United States contribute funds to the developing world to reduce carbon emissions. It is unclear how the Administration intends to honor this agreement by providing public financial support without regular Congressional approval through the authorization and appropriations process.<sup>4</sup> The Green Climate Fund faces considerable uncertainty with a lack of financial commitments from developed nations.<sup>5</sup>

The Obama Administration expects the EPA's regulations through the Clean Power Plan, which went into effect in December 2015, to play a central role in achieving its COP21 pledge, despite significant questions about what impact the Plan will have on global warming.<sup>6</sup> Furthermore, twenty-six states have joined a lawsuit against the EPA over the Clean Power Plan, citing an overreach of the agency's authority under the Clean Air Act and an unlawful attempt to usurp states' ability to regulate electrical generation systems as the basis for their challenge.<sup>7</sup> These legal challenges, in addition to the complicated implementation schedules associated with regulations, make it unlikely that the Plan will be implemented on the Administration's intended timetable, if at all, and thus call into question the Administration's ability to make commitments to the United Nations.<sup>8</sup>

Despite statements about the historic and long-term nature of the promises made at COP21,<sup>9</sup> the administration has no plans to formally present this agreement to Congress for ratification by the U.S. Senate. The President has the power to commit the United States to treaties, but only when the treaty is ratified with the advice and consent of two-thirds of the US Senate. Furthermore, the EPA's Clean Power Plan regulations—the cornerstone of the President's pledge to the United Nations to curb carbon dioxide emissions—has been disapproved by both the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives.

Without Congressional approval of the COP21 agreement, the prospects that the promises on behalf of the United States by the Obama Administration will actually be carried out is highly uncertain.

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<sup>3</sup> <http://www.state.gov/secretary/20092013clinton/rm/2009a/12/133734.htm> and <http://www.nytimes.com/cwire/2009/12/17/17climatewire-hillary-clinton-pledges-100b-for-developing-96794.html>

<sup>4</sup> [http://www.nytimes.com/2015/09/30/business/getting-to-100-billion-in-climate-change-aid.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2015/09/30/business/getting-to-100-billion-in-climate-change-aid.html?_r=0)

<sup>5</sup> [http://www.business-standard.com/article/current-affairs/green-climate-fund-faces-uncertainty-115111300600\\_1.html](http://www.business-standard.com/article/current-affairs/green-climate-fund-faces-uncertainty-115111300600_1.html)

<sup>6</sup> <https://science.house.gov/sites/republicans.science.house.gov/files/documents/HHRG-114-SY-WState-PKnappenberger-20151118.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.rpc.senate.gov/policy-papers/avalanche-of-opposition-hits-epas-co2-rule>

<sup>8</sup> [http://www.epw.senate.gov/public/\\_cache/files/21ffe37a-8052-4498-ba78-18395db0fc42/holmstead.pdf](http://www.epw.senate.gov/public/_cache/files/21ffe37a-8052-4498-ba78-18395db0fc42/holmstead.pdf)

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2015/12/12/statement-president-paris-climate-agreement>