

Today this Committee has a historic opportunity. This bill would require our government to become the world leader in addressing global warming.

Global warming has worsened year after year due to inaction and tiny baby steps. If we want to make a difference, we must be bold and realistic at the same time.

The Carbon Neutral Government Act strikes this balance. It sets the ambitious goals for reducing greenhouse gases that we know are necessary. Scientists tell us that to avoid dangerous global warming we will need to cut overall emissions by 80% by 2050. This legislation asks the federal government to lead the way by achieving carbon neutrality by 2050.

The Carbon Neutral Government Act also builds in provisions to help agencies achieve these goals. It has specific measures to make government operations more efficient. And it contains a judicial review provision to make these requirements enforceable and ensure that agencies take them seriously.

This bill will reassert federal leadership on the most pressing environmental threat we face today. For seven long years, the United States government has lagged behind while other nations, states, cities, companies and citizens have stepped forward to tackle global warming. Over 500 cities and towns in America have pledged to meet the Kyoto Protocol's targets for greenhouse gas emissions reductions. Yet earlier this year, President Bush actually repealed an Executive Order calling for the government to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions.

The legislation we are considering today says that the federal government is no longer going to be doing the least. It will become the world leader.

The federal government is the largest energy consumer in the United States and probably the world. Eliminating the government's greenhouse gas emissions will make a real contribution to slowing global warming. And reducing energy waste will save taxpayer dollars.

The federal government's actions can also transform the economy. The federal government controls fleets of buildings, vehicles, and planes, and it makes hundreds of billions of dollars of purchases every year. Entire industries have developed solely to supply the government with goods and services. Because government needs drive technology advances and create markets for new goods, federal action can help develop a more vibrant and cleaner economy.

The Carbon-Neutral Government Act of 2007 establishes the goals and the mechanisms to harness this potential. Under the legislation, federal agencies must freeze emissions in 2010, reduce emissions to meet annual targets, and achieve zero net emissions by 2050.

The Carbon-Neutral Government Act requires government vehicles to meet the California standards for motor vehicle greenhouse gas emissions | it directs agencies to take into account the real cost of fuel when assessing the cost-effectiveness of efficiency improvements | it sets ambitious but achievable goals recommended by the American Institute of Architects for increasing the energy efficiency of federal buildings | and it strengthens the requirements for agencies to procure energy efficient products.

I am especially proud of the role some of our newest members have played in crafting this bill. Rep. Hodes helped to develop the important green buildings provisions in the legislation. And Rep. Welch proposed an innovative provision that establishes a two-year pilot project allowing government agencies and legislative offices to purchase greenhouse gas emissions offsets.

Congress has set ambitious goals before and transformed America. Forty years ago, we didn't have the Clean Air Act, the Clean Water Act, or other environmental laws that now protect our air, lands and water. Forty years ago, polluters dumped with impunity, a river caught fire, and children were often sickened by pollution. We now have dramatically cleaner factories, energy production, and vehicles.

Over the next forty years, we need another transformation to a world of super-efficient products and clean carbon-neutral energy. This bill is a first step towards achieving that cleaner and safer world.