

Floor Statement of Rep. Peter DeFazio
Safe Climate Caucus
January 8, 2014

I thank the Chair. Well, the Arctic vortex blast coincided with the return of Congress to Washington, D.C. with wind chills well below zero. Now, no surprise, a number of my Republican colleagues who are dyed-in-wool climate change deniers and some of the blathering idiots on talk shows said, “Woah, look at this! Arctic vortex proves that there’s no climate change, there’s no global warming, it’s all a hoax.”

I’d like to begin this new year with a little optimism and hope Congress will take on big challenges, some of the biggest challenges of our time, including climate change. But the bizarre theories of the climate change deniers and the excuses they’ll use probably preclude that.

Given the overwhelming scientific consensus that climate change will spur more extreme weather events, including, yes, record cold and Arctic vortexes with shifts in the jet stream and droughts and a whole host of other things (we had about the driest year on record in the Western U.S. this year in Oregon and California), this is a serious challenge. But unfortunately, as I said earlier, this Congress, because of denial, is pretty much incapable of dealing with this challenge.

Luckily, we do have an alternative, and that is the President’s Climate Action Plan. The fact is that the EPA has been found to have the authority by the Supreme Court of the United States to regulate carbon emissions as pollution, and following through on the President’s Climate Action plan is critical to show the rest of the world that the United States can again lead on this issue and we’re serious about it and use that leverage to bring other countries into line.

The E.U. and others are dealing with it, but there’s a total denial in China. Back in 2005, the U.S. and China emitted about the same

amount of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere, about 7 million metric tons. Five years later, the U.S. was down a little bit, China was up to 10 million and growing every day. China must be part of this.

How are we going to get countries like China and others lined up on this? I think we've got a strong tool. We can demand reductions. We can demand that trade agreements with these nations will level the playing field in many ways. We've ignored labor and the environment in many of these trade agreements.

We can't put U.S. manufacturers at a disadvantage when they are dealing with climate change issues and carbon dioxide emissions and the Chinese aren't because we live, unfortunately, on the same planet as the Chinese and they're destroying the world's climate very, very quickly.

So, even if we take strong measures here, we've got to force those measures on other countries. I think the trade agreements are an ideal place to do this. Unfortunately, the Obama Administration is of two minds on this issue.

I've been acting very forcefully to protect the President's authority to regulate carbon emissions and encouraging EPA to go ahead with strong measures; the Republicans are attempting to overturn and preempt that authority, but it does exist.

Unfortunately, in the office of the special trade representative appointed by the President of the United States, they are busily undermining the President's climate change agenda. Yes, they are acting at complete odds with the Environmental Protection Agency.

The European Union has adopted measures to reduce the global greenhouse gas emissions from all fuels, and transportation fuels included, by 10% within a relatively short period of time. One of those provisions would score the dirtiest sources of fuel as the way they should be for emitting more carbon. That would mean there would be a

penalty against oil, gasoline, and diesel extracted from tar sands, the dirtiest, most polluting way to obtain oil that anyone knows of.

The European Union is moving ahead, but now the President's special trade representative, appointed by the President, somehow is saying that the EU shouldn't do this, the U.S. objects to that and they're in league with Canada in attempting to overturn these steps by the European Union.

The President needs to rein in his special trade representative and we need to protect and encourage the President to deal with this very serious issue.