



## Examining the Oil Industry's Efforts to Suppress the Truth About Climate Change

*Testimony Before the U.S. House of Representatives  
Oversight Subcommittee for Civil Rights and Civil Liberties*

by Mandy Gunasekara, Senior Fellow

Chairman Raskin, Ranking Member Roy, and members of the committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

Climate change is an important issue and one that I personally worked on while serving in President Trump's administration. I was proud to have helped write the first-ever constitutionally viable greenhouse gas emissions standard for our nation's existing coal-fired power plants—the Affordable Clean Energy rule, which replaced the famously stayed Clean Power Plan. I was also proud to have drafted the legal and policy case for exiting the Paris Climate Agreement, which represents the flawed environmental policies of the last administration that was quick to sell out American workers to curry favor among international elites.

I was also very proud to be a part of the efforts to refocus the agency on its core mission—to protect public health and the environment by addressing tangible issues with practical solutions. Whereas the skewed priorities and mismanagement from the last administration left the EPA with the Flint, Michigan, crisis, contamination of the Animas River, and an unprecedented backlog of state submitted environmental compliance plans, today's EPA is much more efficient and much more effective.

This hearing is not premised on facts. It's not a pursuit of facts, better understanding of complex issues of national importance, nor is it meant to produce any meaningful solutions to any of our environmental challenges. It is an attempt to revive a completely debunked effort aimed at bankrupting one of our nation's largest energy companies. It is the latest product of a politically motivated campaign hatched years ago by politicians, activists, and well-funded foundations that want to demonize an entire industry and paint them as corrupt institutions that have “pushed humanity toward climate chaos.” This rhetoric is dishonest, the purported policies are ineffective and represent all that is wrong in the mainstream environmental discussion.

Our energy industry and the men and women who work in it are to be celebrated, not demonized. This country's ability to harness our vast energy resources in a responsible and efficient manner has changed millions of lives for the better. It is why life expectancy and economic growth—both important indicators of human flourishing—have significantly improved.

As the United States has refined this energy development and use process, life expectancy has more than doubled and extreme poverty rates have significantly decreased. Advancements in fossil-based energy and the development of modern economies have provided access to life-saving technologies like heat during the winter, water treatment, medicine, and refrigeration.

A stark contrast exists today in countries that do not have sophisticated energy systems and access to affordable, reliable electricity. In parts of the developing world, life expectancy is 10 to 20 years shorter and children under five regularly succumb to preventable diseases. The reality is that we could change these outcomes by sharing our successful energy technologies, not by prohibiting their use as a result of misaligned environmental policies.

Our successful energy industry is also why we lead the world in environmental progress. Advancements in natural gas extraction that led to horizontal drilling have been a key driver of our world-leading emissions reductions. While many countries, including those that subscribe to the Paris Agreement, continue to struggle with achieving meaningful emissions reductions, the United States leads the world. According to the U.S. Energy Information Administration, despite an uptick in emissions in 2018 that is attributable to President Trump's economic growth, emissions will continue to decrease in 2019 and 2020. According to the International Energy Agency, U.S. overall reductions represent the "largest absolute decline among all countries since 2000."

We also lead the world in clean air progress. Today, we are breathing the cleanest air on record. Through a combination of balanced environmental regulations and market innovations like state-of-the-art scrubbers and more efficient manufacturing processes, the United States has reduced six criteria pollutants, including lead and ozone, by 74 percent since 1970. We are also home to the cleanest drinking water in the world. Additionally, the Trump administration has prioritized \$4 billion of investments in replacing aging infrastructure and reinvigorated the Superfund program, which has resulted in the largest number of once contaminated lands being cleaned up and reintroduced into productive use.

Because these regulatory and deregulatory actions carefully balance the costs and benefits, EPA is advancing environmental protection without forcing the American people to pay excessive costs either directly or through inflated energy costs. At the start of 2019, the Trump administration has already saved Americans over \$2 billion in unnecessary regulatory expenditures. Instead of sending money to Washington, DC, the regulated community is investing in their own businesses in the form of hiring new employees and installing the latest and greatest technologies that is good for both the economy and the environment.

This thoughtful approach is especially important for vulnerable and socio-economically disadvantaged communities that spend a significantly higher portion of their monthly income on energy costs. As such, they are significantly impacted by high-cost environmental policies, some of which have been promoted by members of this committee, like the Green New Deal. A survey by the National Energy Assistance Directors Association (NEADA) found that in the face of increased energy costs, low-income and fixed income Americans will forgo trips to the doctor, keep their house at unsafe temperatures, reduce medication, and skip meals.

No American should be forced to make these types of unhealthy decisions and the good news is that we don't have to pick. President Trump has demonstrated how the best environmental actions are focused on balancing the goals of economic growth alongside reducing pollution, not pitting these interests against each other.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify today and I look forward to your questions. 

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR



**Mandy Gunasekara** is a senior fellow for Life:Powered at the Texas Public Policy Foundation. She's a veteran climate and energy strategist and communicator and founded the Energy 45 Fund, a Jackson, Mississippi-based nonprofit educational organization dedicated to informing the public about recent environmental and economic gains.

Prior to Energy 45, Mandy served in the EPA as the principal deputy assistant administrator for the Office of Air and Radiation. Previously, Mandy served as majority counsel for Chairman Inhofe during the 114th Congress and for Chairman Barrasso during the 115th Congress on the United States Senate Environment and Public Works Committee. She led committee actions and policy development on the

Clean Air Act and climate change issues.

Mandy has a J.D. from the University of Mississippi School of Law and a B.A. from Mississippi College.

Life:Powered is a national initiative of the Texas Public Policy Foundation to raise America's energy IQ. We educate policymakers and the public about the importance of our abundant, reliable, and affordable energy resources to human flourishing.

