



UNITED STATES SENATE
BUDGET COMMITTEE
RANKING MEMBER CHUCK GRASSLEY

Opening Statement by Senator Charles Grassley of Iowa
Ranking Member, Senate Budget Committee
“Budgeting for the Storm: Climate Change and the Costs to National Security”
Wednesday, May 15, 2024

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

This is the Budget Committee’s 17th hearing on climate change this Congress, but it is the first with a national security angle.

Everyone knows that national security is the number one responsibility of the federal government under our constitution.

I agree climate change presents some national security-related challenges, of which the chairman laid out a long list.

However, those challenges pale in comparison to the national security risks associated with our ballooning national debt.

As Admiral Michael Mullen, then Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said in 2010, “The most significant threat to our national security is our debt.”

That was when publicly held debt was about \$9 trillion. Today, it’s over three times larger.

Our unsustainable national debt threatens our status as an economic superpower and our ability to respond to foreign threats.

We’re already set to see interest payments on the national debt surpass defense outlays this year.

Throughout history, fiscal recklessness and economic mismanagement have led to the decline of great powers.

Left unchecked, excessive red ink will sap away our military superiority and our capacity for global leadership.

This would be a tragedy not only for Americans, but for the entire world.

We’ve seen from the disastrous results of the Obama-Biden “lead from behind” strategy that American weakness only invites global instability.

That doesn’t mean I’m willing to give the Department of Defense a blank check. Far from it.

If anyone has followed my history in the United States Senate and oversight of [wasteful spending](#) at the Pentagon, they would recognize the \$450 hammers and the [[\\$10,000](#)] [toilet seats](#).

And for years, I've [pushed DOD](#) to make progress on getting a clean audit, just like every other federal department.

To this very day, the DOD is the only department that's never passed an audit.

Every dollar squandered by the Pentagon is a dollar that's not going towards keeping the country safe.

That's something we can't afford at a time of rising threats. Providing for the common defense is one of the federal government's top constitutional responsibilities.

As I've said in previous hearings, climate change is a serious issue. And, as I referenced earlier, it has some implications for national security and the Pentagon's budget.

For example, melting sea ice means new shipping lanes and accessible resources in the Arctic. China and Russia are already aggressively staking out their claims in that area.

This is a legitimate challenge, and the congressional committees of jurisdiction are giving it due attention.

But let's be clear-eyed about our priorities. Climate change is hardly one of the most important challenges that the Defense Department ought to focus its attention on.

The Biden administration's obsession with reducing the military's carbon footprint actually distracts from the armed forces' real mission of deterring and defeating our enemies.

The administration's rushed transition to an electric vehicle fleet appears to be driven by political posturing, rather than military strategy.

Good luck finding a charging station in the middle of some foreign battlefield.

Similarly, far-left climate policies jeopardize our economy and our energy security while undermining our national security.

Many European countries learned this lesson the hard way after Russia invaded Ukraine in February 2022 and have since reversed course.

Now, Europe is working overtime to increase their capacity to import liquefied natural gas from the United States, since they no longer get it from Russia.

This may be the committee's only hearing on the defense budget this Congress, so I hope we can take off the climate change blinders and discuss some other national security issues.

Climate change didn't cause a rising and aggressive China. It didn't convince Putin to invade Ukraine. And it didn't instigate Hamas' brutal terrorist attacks on the Israeli people.

I look forward to hearing from our witnesses on where they think climate change ranks against some of our most pressing national security challenges.

I welcome all of today's witnesses, and I especially want to thank Admiral McGinn, Admiral Gallaudet and Mr. Dwyer for their service to this country.

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