Pollution is costly. It's costly in lives and it's costly in dollars, and one of the best instruments that has existed in the world over the past 40 years is the Clean Air Act.

The Clean Air Act has decreased lead emissions by 95 percent. In using the Clean Air Act, the EPA, the Environmental Protection Agency, has reduced emissions from diesel engines by almost 90 percent, and that is saving lives and saving dollars. By phasing out ozone-depleting chemicals and working through international agreements, the EPA is cutting non-melanoma skin cancer by hundreds of millions, and reducing smog and soot reduces premature deaths. This is successful legislation.

Undoing the Clean Air Act makes the air less clean. The Clean Air Act has been successful in reducing into the atmosphere the emissions of pollutants/chemicals that kill people. The Clean Air Act has been successful.

And what do we have before us?

Well, tomorrow, as you say, there will be a hearing on legislation not yet in final form--let's hope that it never finds its way into final form. It is legislation that would gut the Clean Air Act. It would prevent the Clean Air Act from keeping up with the times. It would prevent the Clean Air Act from continuing to protect Americans by removing dangerous chemicals from the atmosphere. This is really a matter of public health, and it is also a matter of economics.

The cost of clean air safeguards has been exaggerated over the years. I remember--and I think my colleagues are old enough to remember. I certainly am--when the Clean Air Act was passed. At the time, they said, Oh, this is going to be terrible. It's going to ruin industry. You know, claims about the cost of sulphur dioxide standards were exaggerated by factors of--I don't know--5 or 10.

You know, we've seen from the market price of the sulfur dioxide allowances that the actual market is much less than the estimated cost of complying with the sulfur dioxide regulations. So, again and again, these have been exaggerated, and by implementing the Clean Air Act, we have saved lives and, by association, by extension, saved dollars.

Furthermore, if the Clean Air Act is allowed to continue to look after the air that you and I breathe, it will lead to further efficiency and all of the burgeoning industries in the United States will be able to sell environmentally attractive technologies to the rest of the world rather than to buy them.

So, for all sorts of reasons, we simply cannot afford the proposal of what's coming from the majority on the other side of the aisle that would increase our dependence on foreign oil, that would leave the air less breathable, that would aggravate asthma and heart disease, and would end up undoing the Clean Air Act. What Congress should be doing is making it possible for the Clean Air Act to continue to protect Americans' health and lives, not undoing it.

The Clean Air Act, as the years have gone by, has used the best science to find the best ways to remove the worst pollutants from our air, and this is a very unscientific approach that they're saying. They're saying because of politics we are not going to listen to science; because of politics, we're going to say the Clean Air Act stops here.

The rest of the world is not backing down. The rest of the world is not moving toward dirtier atmosphere, toward more atmospheric admissions. They understand that this is deadly and costly, and as I said a few moments ago, wouldn't it be better if we Americans were selling the technologies to the rest of the world? Many of these technologies were developed here in the United States. Many of the opportunities for more energy efficiency and less atmospheric admissions can be developed here in the United States. Wouldn't it be better if we developed them here and sold them to the rest of the world instead of someday having to buy them?

It would be so unwise to say we're not going to follow the science. It would be so unwise to say to the young people, we're going to turn away from this innovative challenge. It would be so unwise to say to families with asthma, we're not going to make the atmosphere better.

It's not going to happen but, we are here to say we won't let it happen.