



## Hearing Summary

# EPA APPROVAL OF NEW POWER PLANTS: FAILURE TO ADDRESS GLOBAL WARMING POLLUTANTS

Rep. Henry A. Waxman

Chairman, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform

On Thursday, November 8, 2007, the Committee held an oversight hearing on the Environmental Protection Agency's approval of permits for new coal-fired power plants without considering the global warming impacts of the plants' greenhouse gas emissions. Witnesses at the hearing included the EPA Administrator, the Director of New Mexico's Environment Department, the Policy Director of the Natural Resources Defense Council's Climate Center, the Director of the Renewable Energy and Alternatives Laboratory at the University of California, Berkeley, and an environmental lawyer. At the hearing, the Committee heard about EPA's failure to address greenhouse gas emissions from power plants despite its authority to do so, state efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and alternatives to coal-fired power plants.

**Impacts of Coal-Fired Power Plants.** Dozens of permits for new coal-fired power plants are currently pending before EPA and state air pollution agencies. If approved without requiring control technology, these plants would emit billions of tons of carbon dioxide over the course of their lifetime. Adding just a few of these uncontrolled plants could negate the benefits of ongoing state efforts and longstanding federal programs. For example, EPA approval of the proposed Desert Rock coal-fired power plant in New Mexico would wipe out the entire annual greenhouse gas emissions reductions from the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative developed by eight Northeastern states. The combined lifetime greenhouse gas emissions of two proposed plants would wipe out the past decade of greenhouse gas emissions reductions nationwide from EPA's major voluntary initiatives, including EnergyStar.

**Failure to Consider Greenhouse Gas Emissions.** In April 2007, the Supreme Court ruled that EPA has the authority under the Clean Air Act to regulate greenhouse gas emissions. Despite this opinion and the mounting evidence linking greenhouse gas emissions to climate change, EPA continues to approve coal-fired power plants without considering their greenhouse gas emissions. At the hearing, Administrator Johnson admitted that he has authority to consider alternatives to coal-fired power plants, although he has not used that authority. He also acknowledged that there is no deadline to approve these permits, but declined to delay approval until EPA develops a strategy to address greenhouse gas emissions from stationary sources.

**Moratorium on Approval of New Coal-Fired Power Plants.** At the conclusion of the hearing, Chairman Waxman announced that he would introduce a bill placing a moratorium on the approval of new coal-fired power plants until EPA finalizes regulations to address the plants' greenhouse gas emissions.

Additional information, including Chairman Waxman's statement and copies of testimony, is available online at [www.oversight.house.gov](http://www.oversight.house.gov).