

**July 14, 2020**

**To:**

**From: David Crow, Laurie-Ann Flanagan, David Beaudreau**

**Re: EESI - The Climate Crisis Report in Focus**

On July 14th, the Environmental and Energy Study Institute hosted a webinar to discuss the Climate Crisis Report released by the House Select Committee on the Climate crisis on June 30th, focusing on how the extensive recommendations fit together to inform climate policy.

**Introduction:**

Daniel Bresette, the Executive Director of EESI, introduced the four expert panel members being hosted to discuss the majority staff report which represented the compiled information gathered by the Select Committee since its inception in 2019. Michelle Roberts, the National Co-director of the Environmental Justice and Health Alliance for Chemical Policy Reform discussed how the climate change issues addressed in the report disproportionately impacted vulnerable communities of color. Dr. Georges Benjamin, the Executive Director of the American Public Health Professionals Association, presented information on the health hazards posed by the effects of climate change. Rachel Cleetus, the Policy Director of the Climate and Energy Program for the Union of Concerned Scientists, focused on the role of climate mitigation in solving the climate crisis, and Jessie Ritter, the Director of Water Resources and Coastal Policy for the National Wildlife Foundation spoke about the need for adaptation to the coming change and the need for resilience in climate-oriented infrastructure.

**Environmental Justice:**

Ms. Roberts presented a video demonstrating the racial injustices caused by industrial pollution on communities like Mossville, LA. Following the video, she affirmed the need for legal action following the recommendations outlined by the Select Committee in order to reform the EPA’s stance towards many of the industrial companies which operate with impunity with respect to the communities their facilities damage.

**Health Hazards:**

Dr. Benjamin identified increased heat and the corresponding limited access to cooling centers, wildfires, simultaneous extreme rainfall-caused flooding and drought, as well as the increased spread of disease carried by insects as contributors to worsened health directly tied to climate change. Referencing the solutions prescribed within the Climate Crisis Report, he discussed the need for strengthened response plans at federal, state, local, territorial, and tribal levels, improved data collection on climate-related health impacts, resiliency throughout the public health supply chains, enhanced global leadership on climate and health, and increased support for mental health afflictions related to climate change.

**Climate Mitigation:**

Ms. Cleetus discussed the measures that need to be taken in order to reach the 2050 goal of net-zero carbon emissions via the pathways presented in the Report. These steps included transitioning away from fossil fuels, economy-wide deep decarbonization, increased funding for climate-smart agriculture, adherence to the Clean Energy Standard, workforce investments, and drastic improvements in resilient infrastructure. She defined climate-smart agriculture to be increased support for working land programs such as the Conservation Stewardship Program, the Environmental Quality Incentives Program, and the Regional Conservation Partnership Program, provision of financial and technical resources for the agriculture and agroforestry industries, and incentives to reach national goals for soil health and farmland preservation practices. Additionally, she mentioned the need to support organic farming and to invest in viable climate resilient practices resulting in reduced GHG emissions and increased carbon sequestration.

**Resilience and Adaptation:**

Ms. Ritter began her presentation by defining “resilience” to mean the ability for infrastructure to both anticipate and recover from climate crises, and “adaptation” to mean not only the willingness to adjust natural and human systems to handle the changing environment, but also to position the industries to view these changes as opportunities from which they can benefit. She highlighted the 9th pillar of the report, “Making U.S. Communities More Resilient to the Impact of Climate Change,” as well as the primary solutions within the report as: establishment of the National Climate Risk Information Service, expansion of real-time data collection efforts, heightened federal guidance on climate-informed standards, and deliberate investment in infrastructure that will help achieve the net-zero goals before mid-century. Echoing the words of Ms. Cleetus, she also spoke to the efficacy of increased investment in climate mitigation to reduce the cost of disaster recovery, as well as the need to restore American lands, waters, oceans, and wildlife discussed under the 10th pillar of the report.