

U.S. Senator Martin Heinrich
Opening Statement

This hearing will come to order.

Thank you, Chairman Beyer, for joining me to hold this hearing today to highlight what I see as one of the surest actions that we need to take right now to confront the climate crisis and to advance stronger, stable, and broadly shared economic growth.

And thank you to the witnesses here today who are leading experts in the growing movement for widespread electrification.

The fact is that if we ever want to address our contributions to our climate problem, we need to find sustainable and cost-effective substitutes for all the machines we use today that burn fossil fuels.

And it's not just our gas-powered cars and trucks.

We are also burning fossil fuels and emitting carbon pollution from our hot water heaters, furnaces, clothes dryers, ovens, and stoves.

In addition to the climate impacts, researchers are finding that burning fossil fuels in our homes, including methane—otherwise known as “natural” gas—or home heating oil, is really bad for our health.

This is particularly the case if someone in your family has asthma or other respiratory conditions.

Even if you are properly ventilating your fossil combustion devices, the particulate matter in the exhaust from your gas-range stove likely includes unhealthy levels of harmful chemicals like nitrogen dioxide, carbon monoxide, and even formaldehyde.

But the good news is that there are already better electric alternatives for each of these fossil-burning machines in our homes.

Each of these electric substitutes can help reduce our climate pollution and create savings on our energy bills.

Just last month, I invited Secretary of Energy Jennifer Granholm to visit New Mexico.

During her visit, we met with homeowners in Albuquerque's International District neighborhood who are participating in an exciting demonstration project that is helping families install energy efficient and electric water heaters and air-source heat pumps in their homes.

Tammy Fiebelkorn, from the Southwest Energy Efficiency Project, told us that installing these new appliances is reducing the burden of energy costs for low-income families.

As she put it, the project is “fighting climate change while also making sure that the benefits of that fight make it to our frontline and disadvantaged communities.”

That's exactly right.

These new electric appliances will be much more efficient than the fossil fuel-powered machines they are replacing.

And that means significant savings for these families on their monthly utility bills.

Those savings can make an enormous difference for a family living paycheck to paycheck.

And, importantly for our climate, all of these electrified machines can be powered by all the new clean and carbon pollution-free electricity that we will generate in our new clean energy economy.

This is how we can power our long-term economic recovery and save families money by solving our pressing climate challenge.

This is how we can build back better.

We need to get to a place where every time a family sits around a kitchen table to figure out how to replace a broken furnace, stove, or water heater, they choose to and can afford to install an electric machine.

That's why I introduced the Zero-Emissions Homes Act to establish a point-of-sale rebates program for these new electric appliances.

Through this type of federal investment, we can make all of the long-term economic and health benefits of electrification affordable and accessible to all Americans.

We have a once-in-a-generation opportunity to make transformative investments in our energy economy – investments that will protect our planet, help keep our communities healthy, and promote shared prosperity.

We simply don't have any more time to waste in meeting our responsibility on climate.

Widespread electrification is one of the surest strategies we can pursue to finally take actions that meet the scale of this challenge.

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