



UNITED STATES SENATE  
**BUDGET COMMITTEE**  
RANKING MEMBER CHUCK GRASSLEY

**Opening Statement by Senator Chuck Grassley of Iowa**  
**Ranking Member, Senate Budget Committee**  
**“Recreation at Risk: The Nature of Climate Costs”**  
**Wednesday, March 20, 2024**

Last week, Senator Romney said the truth out loud - there is “no work being done by this committee to deal with our budget and to deal with federal spending.”

Senator Romney also said, “This committee needs to stop acting for the cameras and start working for the American people to finally deal with the massive deficits and debt that we have.”

That sounds kind of reasonable to me. I’ve been saying this for 15 climate change hearings and counting. Today, rather than working on a budget to curb spending, we’re discussing the impact of climate change on outdoor recreation.

Democrats pretend that the *Fiscal Responsibility Act* included a budget for 2024 and 2025. In fact, Congress is operating under a so-called ‘deeming resolution’ that’s supposed to be a temporary placeholder until we complete a real budget. It’s no substitute for a serious fiscal plan based on bipartisan input that incorporates new tools to enforce fiscal discipline.

This committee has sole responsibility to produce such a budget. If we don’t, no other committee will. The same can’t be said for the subject of outdoor recreation.

Senators Barrasso and Manchin are working diligently together to pass bipartisan outdoor recreation legislation at the Energy and Natural Resources Committee. Senators Ernst and Shaheen held a similar Small Business Committee hearing on outdoor recreation a few months back.

I know Iowans enjoy outdoor recreation as much as anyone. Whether it’s hunting, fishing, hiking, camping, or boating – Iowa has plenty to offer. Not to brag Mr. Chairman, but Iowa in fact has three times as many ski areas as Rhode Island – we have three, you have one.

Outdoor recreation plays an important role in our national economy. In 2022, outdoor recreation contributed \$564 billion to our gross domestic product.

But, this committee has bigger fish to fry. Last year, interest alone on the national debt cost taxpayers \$659 billion. And interest costs are projected to exceed \$1 trillion within two years. It’s time that we stopped ignoring the Congressional Budget Office’s repeated warnings about our unsustainable debt and the serious risks it poses to our economy.

Yes, climate change also poses a risk to our economy, but its risk to outdoor recreation is far from clear. Peer reviewed research in this area is sparse. To the extent it exists, several studies suggest it could be a boon for many parts of the industry.

Not even President Biden's U.S. Department of Commerce has published any data or research indicating impending turmoil in the outdoor recreation economy due to climate change.

Now, this hearing may add evidence to where the Department of Commerce comes up short. I hope so.

My Democrats friends on this committee consistently complain about an alleged lack of bipartisanship when it comes to climate policy.

But, then they use climate change smoke and mirrors to ignore our immediate responsibilities as legislators.

It's no wonder Americans are fed up with Washington. It's also no wonder participation at these climate hearings has faded.

Senator Romney and I both believe climate change is a significant problem. But, neither of us can support this agenda for the Budget Committee.

Our constituents deserve a Budget Committee that focuses on the budget.

**Witnesses:**

**Dr. Joao Gomes** is a professor of Finance and Economics and Senior Vice Dean of Research, Centers and Academic Initiatives at the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania. He is also a visiting scholar for the U.S. Federal Reserve. His expertise is on the role of financial markets on the macroeconomy.

**Mr. Scott Walter** is the President of Capital Research Center. He served as Special Assistant to the President of the United States for domestic policy. He was also Vice President at the Philanthropic Roundtable. Walter has written for and been quoted in the *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *Wall Street Journal* and *Chronicle of Philanthropy*.

