

Prepared Opening Statement by Senator Chuck Grassley of Iowa
Ranking Member, Senate Budget Committee
Hearing on “Under the Weather: Diagnosing the Health Costs of Climate Change”
April 26, 2023
[VIDEO](#)

Last week’s hearing on tax policy was really refreshing. Revenues are a critical part of the federal budget, and we should remain very focused on the pressing fiscal issues facing our country.

Our Republican colleagues in the House introduced legislation to lift the debt ceiling and curb our federal spending this week. I don’t agree with every item in the bill, but two things are clear: America’s fiscal problems are serious; and Republicans are working to tackle those problems head on.

The U.S is facing public debt that, in a few years, will surpass record levels set in the wake of World War II. Even if we don’t agree with all the contents of the House bill, Republicans are following through with concrete solutions to address our dire fiscal situation and reduce inflation.

It’s been 88 days since President Biden and the Speaker McCarthy met down at the White House as an initial meeting to deal with these issues. No meeting has taken place since then.

I see President Biden refusing to even enter a negotiation room with Speaker McCarthy. Senate Democrats haven’t lifted a finger to prevent us from going headlong off the fiscal cliff.

The Budget Committee is currently holding its sixth hearing on climate change. Let’s now work together to write a budget that has guard rails to reign in federal spending.

I have a reputation for traveling to each of the 99 counties in Iowa holding a Q&A with my constituents in each of those counties. I’ve traveled 42 years in a row – 28 counties so far this year. Not every Iowan agrees with every decision I make as a Senator, but I’m always willing to have a conversation about the topics that matter most to them and our country.

Health care concerns often come up. However, the health effects of climate change isn’t one that I’ve heard much, if at all.

Our government health care programs – including Medicare, Medicaid, and public health – are projected to spend \$21 trillion over the next 10 years.

I do hear a lot from my constituents about preserving Medicare, and I agree that we should be doing that.

We need to ensure that these taxpayer funds that we call Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid are used wisely to address pressing health issues facing Americans. And we should be doing that right now.

If members are really interested in a bipartisan conversation about public health challenges and health care financing, I’d suggest that we focus on the key health challenges facing Americans right now. Some of these are:

- The 107,000 Americans that die from drug overdoses – particularly fentanyl, killing 70,000 of that 107,000;
- How to lower prescription drug costs, so patients don't delay treatment and save money;
- How to improve access to rural health care as hospitals and clinics are struggling to stay afloat; and
- How to address the leading cause of death in America, which happens to be heart disease.

We have significant health care challenges right now. A climate change mandate from Washington, D.C. won't solve the public health and health care financing challenges that we face this very day.

I look forward to hearing the testimony of Mr. Shellenberger. He was invited to serve as an expert reviewer by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. He's also been recognized by *Time Magazine* as a "Hero of the Environment."

The majority argues that climate change will catastrophically lead to more heat-related illness and deaths. They argue it will dramatically amplify global disease, damage respiratory health and harm more Americans from natural disasters. I'm confident that Mr. Shellenberger will be able to separate their alarm from reality.

Dr. Schramm, I also welcome you back to the committee. You remember when the Budget Committee focused on budgetary matters. You testified as a witness on a Reagan administration budget proposal in 1983. That year, the committee held six hearings in one month as we prepared a budget resolution.

And when Reagan and Tip O'Neill got together in 1983 to solve that problem, I doubt if they thought that they were doing it for a whole half-century. It works out that Social Security won't run out of surplus money until 2033, then afterwards we're in a crisis, because people will only be getting seventy-seven percent of what they're getting right now.

Dr. Schramm, you founded the nation's first research organization dedicated to understanding health care financing. I'm interested in exploring your current work to ensure our public health institutions focus on their core mission, where they've been failing.

