

Statement of The Honorable Edward J. Markey
Full Committee Markup
July 11,2012

Mr. Chairman, I move to strike the last word.

Before we conclude today's markup I'd like to take a moment to comment on the wildfires that have ravaged the West already this summer.

I want to commend the firefighters who have been working so hard to bring these blazes under control and protect people's homes and business. I'm glad that President Obama has directed his administration to find ways to ensure they have health coverage as they undertake these taxing, dangerous jobs.

I am concerned that this committee has no announced plans to look into the cause and consequences of these fires. The latest information from the USDA indicates that 56 percent of the lower 48 states are in drought. As bad as it has been, I'm afraid this wildfire season may get worse before it gets better.

Of course scientific studies have shown that climate change is making wildfire worse in our high elevation forests and that in the future many parts of the west will become drier, increasing the risk of wildfire. Warm winters aren't killing off pine beetles and warming temperatures seem to be helping them reproduce twice in a year, doubling their destructive potential.

Our national resources are limited. That's why I've introduced legislation with Mr. Grijalva to focus on reducing the threat of wildfire in areas that will protect the greatest number of our citizens.

Since the chairman has announced we will markup one of his bills that has recently been introduced and has had no hearing, I respectfully request that our wildfire bill be included next week as well. Dealing with wildfires is a more urgent matter than dealing with yet another bill to increase oil production in the United States when we are already producing more oil than we have in a decade.