

**HCR-232**

Submitted on: 3/18/2018 7:34:33 AM

Testimony for EEP on 3/20/2018 9:00:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Present at Hearing</b>
Henry Curtis	Life of the Land	Support	No

Comments:

**HCR-232**

Submitted on: 3/19/2018 2:23:25 PM

Testimony for EEP on 3/20/2018 9:00:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Present at Hearing</b>
Javier Mendez-Alvarez	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

**LATE**

**Testimony of Dr. Danny de Gracia, Th.D., D.Min.**  
before the House Committee on Energy & Environmental Protection  
Chair, Rep. Chris Lee  
Vice Chair, Rep. Nicole E. Lowen  
On the measure H.C.R. 232 / H.R. 202

**“URGING THE UNITED STATES CONGRESS TO REFORM AND AMEND THE IMMIGRATION AND NATIONALITY ACT OF 1965  
AND OTHER RELEVANT FEDERAL IMMIGRATION LAWS TO CLASSIFY CLIMATE-RELATED MIGRANTS AS REFUGEES IN  
ORDER TO RECEIVE GREATER LEGAL STATUS AND PROTECTION”**

*Support with Proposed Amendments*

**Chair Lee, Vice Chair Lowen, Honorable Members of the Committee:**

Thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony in support of this important resolution which affirms both the international implications of climate change and the absolute necessity for a flexible immigration system which takes into consideration the possibility for future planetary disasters.

The international system, at present, is not prepared for the impact of planetary disasters resulting from climate change. As demonstrated by numerous historical refugee crises throughout the 20th century, the destruction of so much as one or a few small countries from natural disasters or war have placed immense economic, cultural, and political strain on states that absorbed refugees, even on a temporary basis. Because the international system as we know it today is still structured in the tradition of the 1648 Peace of Westphalia which emphasizes national sovereignty both in the control of territorial integrity and the balancing of population demographics, there has been significant resistance to accepting, let alone hosting, refugees in general.

The Westphalian system, though necessary, presents a significant obstacle to the preservation of life in times of extraordinary human crisis. In numerous instances throughout the previous century, states were too slow to receive refugees even as hundreds of thousands or in some cases even millions of persons had been killed as a result of conflict, disease, or natural disasters. In the future, however, it would not be unreasonable or even alarmist to suggest that climate change could potentially eliminate whole nations from their traditional geographic and political lands.

The question that must be asked is how would the U.S. government respond if the bulk or entirety of one of our key strategic allies were to be displaced by climate change or planetary disaster. Would the U.S. be willing to host an entire nation in exile? This is a critical policy question to ponder, because in the absence of such an arrangement, Americans themselves may find themselves as refugees rejected at the borders of countries they once perceived to be “friendly.” Our very own continent is not immune to the potential effects of climate change; according to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), in 2010 a whopping 39% of the U.S. population concentrated on the coastline in North America, and that population is expected to increase by as much as 8% by the end of this decade.

I strongly support this resolution, but recommend a friendly amendment to page 4, lines 5-17, which itemize climate change as manifesting in “sea level rise, desertification, or natural disasters exacerbated by climate change.” This is problematic for two reasons. First, climate change can affect populations in ways that are not traditionally labeled as “natural disasters” in that, as an example, they may potentially

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H.C.R. 232 / H.R. 202

give rise to new diseases and pandemics or even extinctions of certain types of animals or plant life without necessarily the phenomena of “desertification” occurring as a prerequisite. Secondly, in the future, certain types of disasters resulting from climate change may be directly attributable to human action. As it is, the nascent field of geoengineering which seeks to modify the planet and/or its climate for industrial, agricultural, or even military purposes may present unintended consequences that result in massive destruction of the environment.

For these reasons, I recommend the text on page 4, lines 5-17 be amended to read:

- (1) **Exempt climate-related migrants who are displaced by climate change or climate disaster** from the requirement that the individual be persecuted on account of race, religion, nationality, group membership, or political opinion in order to qualify as refugees;
- (2) **Explicitly allow climate change and climate disaster-related migrants who have a substantiated hardship** to qualify as refugees

Thank you for this opportunity to testify.

**LATE**

**HCR-232**

Submitted on: 3/19/2018 3:32:00 PM

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<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Present at Hearing</b>
Erica Scott	Individual	Support	No

Comments: