

Why America should measure its environmental performance

We should never fear facts, especially those proving our strength

[Washington Times](#), By Senator Kevin Cramer, March 5, 2026



My commonsense effort to acknowledge the environmental performance of America's workers and industry has been met with breathless hysteria exemplified by a recent piece by Michael McKenna in The Washington Times ("Thanks to Sen. Kevin Cramer, Republicans vote for an energy tax," Web, Feb. 11).

As a result, this straightforward directive for the federal government to compare U.S.-made goods with those produced abroad has been mischaracterized as an "energy tax" destined to devastate American families and shutter factories.

The claim is false. The language in question directs the Department of Energy to conduct a transparent study comparing the environmental footprints of American products (such as steel, cement and aluminum) with those of foreign producers. It requires consultation with experts, clear documentation of methodology and a public report.

That's it. No taxes. No fees. No mandates. It's about data to prove American production is the most efficient in the world. Why take my or their word for it? Read it for yourself: "The Committee directs [the Energy Department] to consult with relevant agencies, institutions, academia, and think tank partners and to provide not later than one year after the date of enactment of this Act a study to determine the average emissions intensity of certain goods produced in the United States compared to those from other countries."

Calling this a tax is fearmongering. It's part of a broader pattern of deliberate mischaracterization and ad hominem attacks meant to distract from the substance of the policy.

It's a classic Washington play for when you're losing: Invent an argument not based on reality and caricature the winning side's motives to inflame rather than inform. When facts are inconvenient, distortion becomes the way.

Critics have accused me of doing this "surreptitiously." This language mirrors the PROVE IT Act I introduced more than two years ago. The bill has been publicly available, debated in committees, covered in the press and even favorably voted out of committee.

It was in the House appropriations report in July 2024 and the Senate report in August 2024, in plain sight, like a billboard on the interstate, for more than 500 days. If these opponents didn't notice until now, then that's not stealth on my part; it's incompetence on theirs.

Sadly, there are still Americans who want to give China a free pass. Backed by corporate America, which benefited from offshoring jobs, these mercenaries turn a blind eye to how countries such as China use lax manufacturing standards to dump goods on our markets while we play by the rules.

They oppose anything that might empower America to fight back, including tools aligned with President Trump's vision.

The president has been crystal clear: America must stop tolerating one-sided trade relationships and emissions havens that undercut our workers. For decades, foreign competitors manipulated standards, erected barriers and benefited from America's passivity, hollowing out U.S. manufacturing while flooding our markets with cheaper goods that do not meet the standards we impose on ourselves.

Those days are over. Our bipartisan PROVE IT Act acknowledges American excellence while protecting workers and businesses. The Trump administration can use the data to address unfair trade practices or as a shield against other countries that refuse to give us proper credit. This matters now more than ever, as the European Union's Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism will soon impose emissions-based charges on certain American exports using Europe's own assumptions and calculations. Without our own authoritative data, U.S. businesses will be subject to whatever numbers Brussels decides to apply. This study is not environmental activism; it's economic intelligence. It gives America the hard facts needed to defend our industries, negotiate from a position of strength and resist unjustified taxes. To the opponents, I say this: America should never fear facts, especially when those facts prove our strength. From the environment to labor and the finished product, our manufacturing and industrial base is without peer. We should be proud to prove it.

U.S. Sen. Kevin Cramer, North Dakota Republican, is a member of the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee. He also serves on the Senate Armed Services, Environment and Public Works, and Banking, Housing and Urban Affairs committees. Mr. Cramer previously served three terms as North Dakota's at-large member in the U.S. House of Representatives.