WASHINGTON — Science and politics rarely play nicely together, and a House hearing Tuesday on a bill to strip the Environmental Protection Agency of its power to regulate greenhouse gas emissions proved no exception.

Representative Jay Inslee came with books and reports. Democrats on the Energy and Commerce Committee’s subcommittee on energy and power demanded the hearing in the hope of slowing the inexorable progress of the bill, known as the Energy Tax Prevention Act of 2011, which enjoys the near-unanimous support of the Republican House majority.

They appear to have failed. Despite some fireworks, the handful of members from both parties who attended the hearing left with the views they arrived with. The subcommittee is expected to approve the bill later this week.

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Andrew Harrer/Bloomberg

The measure would overturn the E.P.A.’s finding that carbon dioxide and other heat-trapping gases pose a threat to public health and the environment and would bar the agency from writing any regulations to control them. The bill’s sponsors say that the climate science behind the finding is dubious and that the proposed rules would have a devastating impact on the economy.

In an effort to support the E.P.A.’s regulatory power, committee Democrats rounded up five eminent academic climatologists who defended the scientific consensus that the planet is warming and that human activities like the burning of fossil fuels are largely responsible. The professors called for swift and concerted action to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases like carbon dioxide, although they did not endorse any particular policy means for achieving them.

The Republicans countered with two scientific witnesses who said that while there was strong evidence of a rise in global surface temperatures, the reasons were murky and any response could have adverse unintended effects. Another scientist said that the E.P.A.’s decision to ban the
Representative Jay Inslee, Democrat of Washington, is one of Congress’s most ardent advocates of strong action to combat global warming. Mr. Inslee brought to the hearing a two-foot-high stack of books and scientific reports, which he placed on his desk as a sort of totem of the robust science behind climate-change theory.

He used his question time largely to criticize Republicans as suffering from what he called an “allergy to science and scientists.” He said he was embarrassed that a country that sent a man to the moon and mapped the human genome could be on the verge of enacting a law that overturns a scientific finding based on the testimony of a few scientists who question the extent of human responsibility for altering the climate.

“If Copernicus, Galileo, Newton and Einstein were testifying today,” Mr. Inslee said, “the Republicans would not accept their views until all the Arctic ice has melted and hell has frozen over, whichever comes first.”

He said that much of the skepticism about global warming in Congress and among the public has been fed by a campaign of disinformation from energy interests. He likened it to the tobacco industry’s efforts to discredit the finding that smoking causes cancer. “People with enormous financial stakes attacked that science,” Mr. Inslee said.

Representative Cory Gardner, a freshman Republican from Colorado and a skeptic of human-caused global warming, ribbed Mr. Inslee by offering to buy him an e-reader to make his stack of studies more manageable.

“Oh,” Mr. Inslee responded, “would you like to read some? It might be helpful.”

“Maybe you’d like to read some of mine,” Mr. Gardner said.

“Be happy to,” Mr. Inslee said. “It’s a much shorter list.”

The scientists themselves, when given the rare opportunity to speak, tried to steer clear of policy matters and stick to their scientific expertise. One witness, Christopher B. Field, director of global ecology at the Carnegie Institution for Science, piqued the interest of members on both sides of the aisle by detailing new research on the adverse effects of rising temperatures on agriculture. Dr. Field said crops had certain temperature thresholds above which yields dropped sharply. For corn, he said, that temperature is 84 degrees, and a single day of 104 degrees causes a 7 percent drop in yield.

Dr. Field said that extreme warming could reduce crop yields by more than 60 percent. “This new information is quite striking,” he said. “Major food crops and cotton show little sensitivity
to rising temperatures until you reach a threshold. That’s why people are generally not aware of these sensitivities.”

Representative Morgan Griffith of Virginia, a freshman Republican and an avowed skeptic on climate change, noted that ancient temperature records indicate periods of warming during the Mesopotamian and Egyptian civilizations and again during the rise of the Vikings, and wanted the scientists to explain just how warm it got during those eras.

Mr. Griffith also wanted to know why the ice caps on Mars were melting and why he had been taught 40 years ago in middle school that Earth was entering a cooling period.

“What is the optimum temperature for man?” he asked. “Have we looked at that? These are questions that, believe it or not, I lay awake at night trying to figure out.”

The scientists promised to provide written answers.

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