



# Legislators Engagement Program

University of Chicago · May 8-12, 2022

Supported by



# About

Over the last two decades, India has achieved significant economic growth. However, balancing the need to increase access to energy while fulfilling policies addressing environmental concerns is challenging. The Energy Policy Institute at the University of Chicago (EPIC) launched EPIC India in 2014 to promote an understanding of energy and environmental challenges in India. Drawing on expertise from the University of Chicago's renowned economists and leading policy experts, EPIC India's work has led to large-scale implementation in different Indian states since 2014.

Understanding how critical political leadership is in enacting ground-breaking public policies that benefit the environment in the long run, EPIC India launched the Legislators Program in 2017. The Program, spread over a few days, invited a cross-party delegation of Indian Legislators to engage with experts at the University of Chicago. The Program offered a platform for the legislators to engage directly with experts who have extensively researched India's environment and energy challenges. A positive response from the first group led to another delegation in 2018.



# Introduction

The Legislators Program 2022 had nine MPs visit the University of Chicago between May 8-12th, 2022. During the trip, the lawmakers met experts from the Energy Policy Institute at the University of Chicago (EPIC), Development Innovation Lab (DIL), and the Becker Friedman Institute for Economics (BFI) at the University of Chicago.

The Program, through high-level interactions, facilitated knowledge exchange and served as a platform to align individual efforts into collective action. Over the five days, lawmakers discussed solutions to India's energy, pollution, and climate change-related problems with academicians and subject matter experts. The engagements helped the legislators better understand EPIC's research priorities and co-identify priorities and solutions that can be implemented in specific constituencies.



## **Prof. Michael Greenstone**

The Milton Friedman Distinguished  
Service Professor in Economics and  
Director of EPIC

"Innovate policies work when policymakers are ready to experiment. From our working for several years in Gujarat, Maharashtra, Odisha, Bihar, and other Indian states, we know that Indian lawmakers have been at the forefront of trying groundbreaking policies to balance India's growth story and environmental concerns. Therefore, we are thrilled to learn and share best practices with Indian MPs and join them in accelerating positive change for citizens across India."

# Highlights

## Welcome Briefing **Day 1**

The Legislators Program began with an informal session with the 2022 delegation of Indian Parliamentarians. Sidhartha Vermani, Executive Director of EPIC India, provided the visiting Parliamentarians with an overview of the Program. After the introduction, Sam Ori, Executive Director of BFI and EPIC, gave an overview of the institutional work, the mission and work of each institute, and their portfolios in India.



**Sidhartha Vermani**  
Executive Director, EPIC India

"This is the third edition of the legislator's program, and as we learn from the experiences of our MP's, we are also trying to share EPIC's global and India-specific research findings to co-identify priorities and solutions that may be implemented in individual constituencies. The goal is also to carry out groundbreaking research that addresses global and local challenges."

The legislators in conversation with Sidhartha Vermani, ED - EPIC India, Sam Ori, ED- EPIC and Anant Sudarshan, South Asia Director EPIC



## Presentation and Discussion **Day 2**

Amir Jina, Assistant Professor, Harris School of Public Policy, briefed the legislators about the Climate Impact Lab (CIL) and the lab's insights on India. CIL is a collaboration between economists, climate scientists, data engineers, and risk analysts that are building the world's most comprehensive body of research quantifying the impacts of climate change. Professor Jina, during his talk, mainly focussed on highly localized estimates of climate damages across India and the associated vital policy considerations.

Supratik Guha, Professor and Senior Advisor to Argonne Physical Sciences and Engineering talked to the parliamentarians about using sensor networks to measure environmental and other parameters for land and water. Professor Guha described the successful development of two such robust pilot networks over the past five years: one for high-resolution mapping of water quality across rivers in India (Ganga, Godavari, Yamuna); and the other for terrestrial ecology and agriculture in the Midwestern part of the U.S.

The visiting Indian MPs were also briefed on the Air Quality Life Index (AQLI) by Christa Hasenkopf, AQLI Director. Christa focussed on how AQLI is intended to serve as a vital tool for policymakers who can use the interactive platform to determine the impacts of air pollution policies on life expectancy.

Dr. Anant Sudarshan, South Asia Director of EPIC, shared insights about how the Emissions Trading Scheme can be a tool for air pollution reduction. While talking about this 10-year collaboration between the University of Chicago, the MoEFCC, and the Government of Gujarat, Dr. Sudarshan mentioned this project was an example of a fruitful research policy partnership that led to India's first cap-and-trade market in Surat.

Prof. Chris Blattman, Ramalee E. Pearson Professor of Global Conflict Studies, Harris School of Public Policy also discussed his new book - Why We Fight: The Roots of War and the Paths to Peace, with the visiting delegates.



Amir Jina, Assistant Professor, Harris School of Public Policy discussing the Climate Impact Lab's insights on India's climate damage

## Knowledge Sharing Day 3

The legislators attended a discussion on Sanskrit Studies by Gary Tubb, Anupama, and Guru Ramakrishnan, Professor, Department of South Asian Languages and Civilizations. The lawmakers also discussed sustainable mining with Chong Liu, Neubauer Family Assistant Professor of Molecular Engineering (PME). The interaction presented an overview of PME's work around sustainable resource mining and separation.

The parliamentarians met with New York Times Journalist Lisa Friedman to discuss climate policy and share their local viewpoints.

There were several other discussions and presentations on topics ranging from early detection of brain disease, oral cancer prevention, screening, and earlier diagnosis in India to the causes of the Ukrainian war.

The Legislators group from this year in presence of Jonathan Pershing, Program Director of Environment, William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, EPIC Director Michael Greenstone and New York Times journalist Lisa Friedman



## Public Discussion **Day 3**

A public discussion titled "Can the World Phase Out Fossil Fuels?" was organized with Indian Member of Parliament Priyanka Chaturvedi, former U.S. Deputy Climate Envoy Jonathan Pershing, Program Director of Environment at the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, and EPIC Director Michael Greenstone. The event was moderated by Lisa Friedman, who is also an EPIC journalism fellow.



The panel discussion on Climate Policy in the Developing World between Jonathan Pershing, Program Director of Environment, William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, EPIC Director Michael Greenstone and Priyanka Chaturvedi, MP, Rajya Sabha, moderated by Lisa Friedman



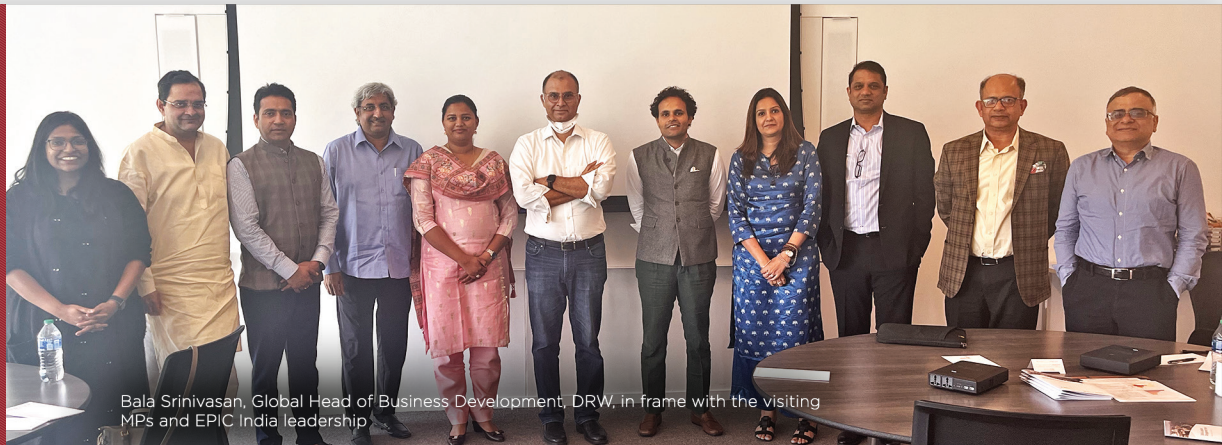
**Priyanka Chaturvedi**

Member of Parliament,  
Rajya Sabha

**“We are at the centre stage of finding solutions to address climate change at the expense of our economy. India has been talking about the need for transition because the transition to us is not just related to our economy, the environment is a very integral part of our cultural history. Till 2030 we are looking at transitioning to about 500 GW of renewable energy. We are hoping that the developed world would come forward and address it from the point of equity and climate justice.”**

## Presentation and Discussion Day 4

Prof. Michael Kremer, University Professor in the Kenneth C. Griffin Department of Economics, discussed how commercial incentives for innovation often do not align with the social needs, with the visiting MPs. He also talked about how the new Development Innovation Lab at UChicago actively engages with several governments and significant philanthropists to adapt these approaches to their respective contexts. In this talk, Michael Kremer discussed ways to spur innovation and shared his practical experience applying these in partnership to positively impact the lives of hundreds of millions of people worldwide.



Bala Srinivasan, Global Head of Business Development, DRW, in frame with the visiting MPs and EPIC India leadership

The parliamentarians also interacted with Rachel Glennerster, Associate Professor of Economics, on incentivizing innovation for Climate Change. Prof Glennerster discussed using government purchasing power to create an advanced market commitment for technologies that fulfill critical innovation gaps.

Michael Greenstone, Milton Friedman Distinguished Service Professor in Economics; Director, EPIC; Director, Becker Friedman Institute, talked about the global energy challenge with the lawmakers. Prof Greenstone talked about how there is a need to balance access to reliable, affordable energy with policies that can effectively limit emissions of pollutants that harm human health and carbon emissions causing climate change. During his talk, Prof Greenstone also outlined India's energy and environmental challenges and opportunities over the coming decades.

The MPs also attended several other talks on blockchain technology, labor economics, and tracking COVID in India alongside a lunch event co-hosted by EPIC and SASPA.

## Interaction **Day 5**

The Program also enabled lawmakers to interact with young minds. Parliamentarian Ritesh Pandey met with the undergraduate students at the University and discussed 'climate justice' and his take on the issue and solutions to confront it. The students also interacted with Pandey about his experiences as a policymaker and his efforts to confront India's climate, energy, and environmental challenges.

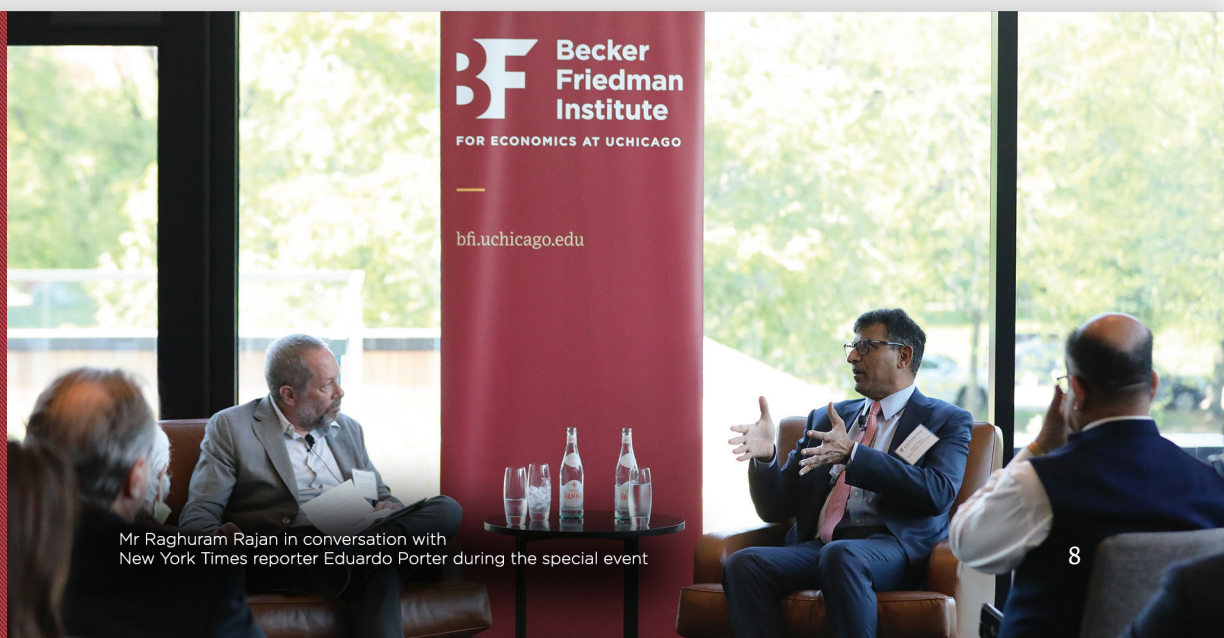
Visiting delegates also attended a book talk with Dali Yang, William Claude Reavis Professor, Department of Political Science on China's Continuing Covid Challenge, and a session on Globalization, Trade, and Economic Growth with Austan Goolsbee, Robert P. Gwinn Professor of Economics, University of Chicago Booth School of Business. The session focused on the outlook for globalization, trade, and global economic growth.

## Special Event **Day 5**

A special event was also organized to discuss with Raghuram Rajan, Katherine Dusak Miller Distinguished Service Professor of Finance, Chicago Booth School of Business, who took a session on the Global Economic Outlook. This session was moderated by Eduardo Porter, New York Times economics reporter.

The enriching five-day knowledge-exchange event concluded with a dinner discussion with Paul Alivisatos, President, The University of Chicago, and Ka Yee C. Lee, Provost, The University of Chicago. The event was moderated by Michael Greenstone, Milton Friedman Distinguished Service Professor in Economics and Director; EPIC, who thanked the legislators for their time and commitment.

Earlier all the legislators also received certificates of participation during a ceremony.



Mr Raghuram Rajan in conversation with New York Times reporter Eduardo Porter during the special event

# Biographies

## INDIAN MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT



**Dr. Amar Patnaik** is a Member of Parliament in the Rajya Sabha from Odisha. With a PhD in Institutional Economics, he often writes on issues relating to economics, finance, technology, and environment. Dr Patnaik has also authored a book, "Institutional Change and Power Asymmetry in the Context of Rural India."



**Brijendra Singh** is a Member of Parliament in the 17th Lok Sabha from Hisar (Lok Sabha constituency), Haryana. Before joining politics in 2019, he was an Indian Administrative Service (IAS) officer from Haryana state cadre. His latest position within Haryana government was of the Managing Director of Haryana State Co-operative Supply and Marketing Federation Limited (HAFED), the apex co-operative federation in Haryana.



**Chintakunta Munuswamy (CM) Ramesh** is an Indian Politician from the BJP Party, representing Andhra Pradesh in Rajya Sabha. He is also the founder of a leading infrastructure development company which has interests in energy, roads, irrigation, and property development.



**Heena Gavit** is a Member of Parliament in the 17th Lok Sabha from Nandurbar (Lok Sabha constituency), Maharashtra. A doctor by profession, Heena Gavit has highlighted the public health implication of air pollution at multiple forums. Heena Gavit is also a member of the Parliamentarian Standing Committee on Water Resources.



**Kotagiri Sridhar** is a Member of Parliament in the 17th Lok Sabha from Eluru (Lok Sabha constituency), Andhra Pradesh. His focus area is in renewable energy and alternatives to single use plastic. Kotagiri Sridhar is also on the Parliamentarian Consultative Committee for the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change.



**Priyanka Chaturvedi** is a Member of Parliament in the Rajya Sabha from Maharashtra. In the 12 years of her journey as a politician, she has played an essential part in shaping the media campaign for several state elections. Priyanka Chaturvedi recently submitted a private member's bill on Climate Change Council in the winter parliamentary session.



**Rahul Kaswan** is a Member of Parliament in the 17th Lok Sabha from Churu (Lok Sabha constituency), Rajasthan. He has raised questions on energy poverty in the Indian Parliament on multiple occasions. Rahul Kaswan is also a member of the Parliamentarian Standing Committee on Transport, Tourism and Culture.



**Ritesh Pandey** is a Member of Parliament in the 17th Lok Sabha from Ambedkar Nagar (Lok Sabha constituency), Uttar Pradesh. Ritesh Pandey's core interests lie at the intersection of caste, gender, and climate change. Ritesh Pandey is also on the Parliamentarian Consultative Committee for the Ministry of Power and New & Renewable Energy.



**Shivkumar Udasi** is a Member of Parliament in the 17th Lok Sabha from Haveri (Lok Sabha constituency), Karnataka. He has raised questions on the status of renewable energy penetration and government's stand on purchasing stubble as a fuel alternative. Shivkumar Udasi is also a member of the Parliamentarian Standing Committee on Energy and Water Resources.

# Glimpses





**f** @EPIC\_India

**in** EPIC India

 @EPIC\_India

 @EPIC India

 epic.uchicago.in