

GP 29P

June 6, 2002

President George W. Bush  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Ave., NW  
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear President Bush:

We write to you today on an urgent issue. As your Administration recently reported to the United Nations pursuant to our treaty obligations, our Earth is warming due to human-released greenhouse gases, with potentially disastrous consequences. We were taken aback by your recent statement in the press calling the nation's communication to the United Nations a "report put out by the bureaucracy," suggesting that you may not fully agree with the conclusions of the document. We therefore write to clarify what, if anything, you disavow from the report.

As you know, the U.N. Report at issue is the United States' Third National Communication on Climate Change. The document was required to be submitted under Articles 4.2 and 12 of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. It was noticed in the Federal Register on November 15, 2001 and was developed through a significant interagency process, with contributions from the Department of State, Department of Commerce, the Department of Agriculture, the Treasury Department, the Department of Energy, and the Environmental Protection Agency. It was reviewed by the White House since last January, and was released in the last week. Given the substantial work that went into its completion, and its obvious import as our nation's official statement to the rest of the world on the problem of global warming, we would hope that it has been carefully reviewed and approved before it was released.

Your dismissive statement, however, suggests that you may not stand behind the findings and conclusions of the report. Therefore, we would like to know if your Administration agrees with the following statements from the report. If you do not agree with the statement, please inform us what the position of your Administration is on the matter.

\* "Greenhouse gases are accumulating in Earth's atmosphere as a result of human activities, causing global mean surface air temperature and subsurface ocean temperature to rise. While the changes observed over the last several decades are likely due mostly to human activities, we cannot rule out that some significant part is also a reflection of natural variability."

\* "When sequestration is accounted for, total U.S. greenhouse gas emissions are projected to increase by 43 percent between 2000 and 2020. This increased growth in absolute emissions will be accompanied by a decline in emissions per unit of GDP."

\* "The model scenarios used in the National Assessment project that the continuing growth in greenhouse gas emissions is likely to lead to annual-average warming over the United States that could be as much as several degrees Celsius (roughly 3-9 degrees F) during the 21st century. In addition, both precipitation and evaporation are projected to increase, and occurrences of unusual warmth and extreme wet and dry conditions are expected to become more frequent. For areas

experiencing these changes, they would feel similar to an overall northern shift in weather systems and climate condition."

\* "While warming over the 48 contiguous states amounted to about 0.6 degrees C (about 1 degree F); warming in interior Alaska was as much as 1.6 degrees C (about 3 degrees F), causing changes ranging from the thawing of permafrost to enhanced coastal erosion resulting from melting of sea ice."

\* "Even these seemingly small temperature-related changes have had some effects on the natural environment, including shorter duration of lake ice, a northward shift in the distributions of some species of butterflies, changes in the timing of bird migrations, and a longer growing season."

\* "Based on the studies carried out, changes in land cover induced by climate change, along with an increased level of disturbances, could have varied impacts on ecosystem services, including the abilities of ecosystems to cleanse the air and water, stabilize landscapes against erosion, and store carbon."

If you agree with these statements, however, we believe that they paint a picture that requires much more significant action than your Administration has proposed to date. In our view, your proposal does not diverge from business as usual, maintaining the previously forecast increases in our emissions of greenhouse gases. We must take much stronger steps to address this pressing problem, including measures that will require our emissions of these dangerous gases to decrease, not increase. We therefore call on you to convene a summit with the Congressional and Senate leadership to plan a meaningful and proactive climate change strategy.

Sincerely,

Sen. Joe Lieberman  
Sen. Jim Jeffords  
U.S. Rep. Jay Inslee  
U.S. Rep. George Miller  
U.S. Rep. Maurice Hinchey  
U.S. Rep. Jim Olver