

WHO 4

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FAX COVER SHEET

To: Phil Conroy

Fax: _____

From: Bill O'Keefe

Date: _____

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1730 K Street, N.W., Suite 905 • Washington, DC 20006-3868
 Telephone (202) 296-9655 • Facsimile (202) 296-9714
 Email info@marshall.org • Website www.marshall.org

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Dear Andy:

I am writing about the recently released national assessment, which seems completely inconsistent with the President's policy and expressed views on the subject. I suspect that you have had your fill of feedback about the report. It is not my intent to pile on with more criticism. Instead, I want to offer some observations that you might find useful.

Although there are always many explanations when something like this happens, I would like to believe that it was primarily a case of a bureaucracy run amok and a review process that got short shrift because people were stretched thin and focused on other priorities. However, recent statements by Mr. Fleischer have added to the confusion and raise the question of whether policy is still being driven by the best available science.

The EPA report and his comments do not reflect the actual state of climate science. Mr. Fleischer's quotes from the National Academy report were unfortunate because they do not reflect the actual substance of that report. Indeed, the two sentences that he cited from the Executive Summary are contradictory. Last December, the Marshall Institute released a report that addressed the current state of knowledge and the deficiencies in the most recent report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. Jim Schlesinger co-chaired the work group that produced that report. Although I sent you a copy at the time, I am including another copy because it may prove helpful in dealing with the current situation.

I do not intend to go into detail about the findings in the Marshall report but simply want to make two observations about the science. First, according to the prevailing theory about human induced global warming, increased greenhouse gases in the atmosphere, such as CO₂ produced by human activities, trap heat from the earth's surface, which then warms the atmosphere, which then in turn warms the earth's surface. For this theory to be an explanation of recent warming, the lower atmosphere would have to show a clear warming trend. It has not. Satellite data since 1979, and weather balloon data prior to that, do not show a warming trend in the atmosphere. Without a warmer atmosphere to radiate heat back to earth, there cannot be a significant human impact on surface temperatures.

Second, proxy data from ice cores going back more than one hundred thousand years do not reveal a pattern that is consistent with the theory that increases in carbon dioxide lead to an increase in surface temperature.

The President's policy is scientifically sound but it needs public support to withstand both domestic and international pressure to rejoin the Kyoto club. Currently, the public's priorities do not put environmental issues and especially climate change in its top tier. That could be a justification for not allocating more resources to managing and coordinating the climate issue. However, for environmental advocates and their allies, this issue is the top priority and, as you have seen, they will try to exploit any opportunity to put the Administration on the defensive and to promote wrong-headed policy.

Since the public's priorities do not now support a rush to judgment about climate change, the Administration has the time for focused research, objective analysis and assessment, and most importantly, for promoting a better public understanding of the climate system and human influence on it. Clearly, accomplishing those objectives will require better inter-agency coordination, a strong commitment to clear and consistent objectives, and clarity in communications. The Clinton Administration had a climate task force that was chaired by a senior person on the White House staff. As a result of that system, everyone was on the same page, with the same message, even though they were reading from the wrong book.

I hope that you will urge the President to seriously consider recreating such a task force. As you know, I am prepared and willing to help any way that I can.

Sincerely,



William O'Keefe
President

P.S. You are doing a great job.