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RECORD TYPE: FEDERAL (NOTES MAIL)

CREATOR:National Center for Public Policy Research <National_Center_for_Public_Pol_r

CREATION DATE/TIME: 7-MAY-2003 00:22:50.00

SUBJECT:: Ten Second Response: Time to Debate Global Warming Again

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National Center for Public Policy Research

Ten Second Response

Fast Facts on the Environment

National Center for Public Policy Research

Time to Debate Global Warming Again

DATE: May 7, 2003

BACKGROUND: The global warming debate is again coming to the forefront on Capitol Hill. Senator John McCain (R-AZ) has scheduled global warming hearings in the Senate Commerce Committee May 7; Senator Joseph Lieberman is expected to give a speech May 7 on global warming; and, most significant, consideration of the Senate Energy Bill, S. 14, began this week. Numerous amendments relating to global warming are expected to be proposed, and debate is expected to be contentious.

Expected amendments include, among others:

An amendment based on McCain-Lieberman's S. 139, which would force the electricity, transportation, industrial and commercial sectors to cut greenhouse gas emissions to 2000 levels by 2010, and 1990 levels by 2016 (see Ten Second Response #1803);

An amendment based on Senator Jeff Bingaman (D-NM)'s proposal, consistent with last year's Democrat Energy Bill, to establish a federal greenhouse gas emission reporting system;

An amendment by Senator Ron Wyden (D-OR) to establish a "Forest Carbon Program" to give federal funding to states, forest owners, local governments and others to restore and conserve forests.

TEN SECOND RESPONSE: All global warming legislation, regardless of sponsor, tends to be expensive, and most propose policies that would kill

many hundreds of thousands of jobs. Jobs at the U.S. Senate are not, however, among those imperiled.

THIRTY SECOND RESPONSE: The theory that human activity is causing the planet to warm significantly is just that, a theory, and one that, so far, hasn't been coming true. Any serious discussion about global warming - whether in Senate debate, hearing testimony, speeches, prepared remarks or press releases - should include an acknowledgement that the best available scientific models of our atmosphere are not yet sophisticated enough to accurately predict either future temperatures or humankind's impact upon climate.

DISCUSSION: Points to ponder as the global warming debate continues:

"One must dig carefully through [the National Academy of Sciences report "Climate Change Science"] to discover that water vapor and cloud droplets are in fact the dominant cause of greenhouse warming. We are not told, however, what fraction of the greenhouse effect is due to water vapor and clouds. Nor are we told that carbon dioxide is a minor greenhouse gas - one that accounts for less than ten percent of the greenhouse effect - whose ability to absorb heat is quite limited. Adding more carbon dioxide to the atmosphere only increases greenhouse warming very slowly. Similarly, decreasing the amount of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere only decreases greenhouse warming very slowly." -National Policy Analysis #349: Climate Change Science? National Academy of Sciences Global Warming Report Fails to Live Up to Its Billing, by Gerald Marsh

"Carbon dioxide is a minor greenhouse gas that occurs naturally in the atmosphere and helps to maintain the earth at a temperature suitable for life. Carbon dioxide is essential to the growth of all plants.. Without it, plants could not grow and all animal life would consequently die. In no way is this gas a pollutant. To call it one is badly misleading. The principal greenhouse gas is water vapor." -National Policy Analysis #458: Nonsense by Any Other Name: Calling Carbon Dioxide A Pollutant Doesn't Make It A Pollutant, by Gerald Marsh

"Approximately 5 million different parameters have to be followed for a computer mock-up of the climate system to be accurate. All their important interactions and impacts must be known, but they are not. Furthermore, a full mock-up, covering all the spatial scales and generating a 40-year forecast of climate change, would take more than 10 to the power of 34 years of supercomputing. In other words, an incredibly long wait and a near-impossible computational task." -National Policy Analysis #417, Climate Change and California Assembly Bill 1058: Is it Hype? by Dr. Willie Soon

"The vast majority of American scientists who specialize in climate studies - including such giants as S. Fred Singer, former head of the U.S. Weather Service's satellite operations; Frederick Seitz, past president of the National Academy of Sciences; and the University of Virginia's Patrick Michaels - believe the [global warming] fear-mongers are wrong. The U.N. Panel on Climate Change, often cited by environmentalists, bases its projections on worst-case scenarios from two flawed computer models, each of which significantly contradicts the other when it comes to impact of global warming on specific geographical areas." -National Policy Analysis #446, McCain and Lieberman Join the Ranks of Ecoactivists With New Legislation on Global Warming, by Amy Ridenour

"Contrary to the conventional wisdom and the predictions of computer models, the Earth's climate has not warmed appreciably in the past two

decades, and probably not since about 1940. The evidence is overwhelming." -Testimony of Dr. S. Fred Singer, President, The Science & Environmental Policy Project, before the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation on Climate Change, July 18, 2000

"Dr. Craig Idso of the Center for the Study of Carbon Dioxide and Global Change, one of the nation's leading carbon dioxide research centers, examined records of atmospheric carbon dioxide concentrations and air temperature over the last 250,000 years. There were three dramatic episodes of global warming that occurred at the end of the last three ice ages. Interestingly, temperatures started to rise during those warming periods well before the atmospheric carbon dioxide started to increase. In fact, the carbon dioxide levels did not begin to rise until 400 to 1,000 years after the planet began to warm. Concludes Dr. Idso, 'Clearly, there is no way that these real-world observations can be construed to even hint at the possibility that a significant increase in atmospheric carbon dioxide will necessarily lead to any global warming.'" -National Policy Analysis #334, Carbon Dioxide is Good for the Environment by John Carlisle

FOR MORE INFORMATION: Please see our recommended links at right or visit our website.

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Recommended Links

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National Policy Analysis #458: Nonsense By Any Other Name: Calling Carbon Dioxide A Pollutant Doesn't Make It A Pollutant by Gerald Marsh at <http://www.nationalcenter.org/NPA458.html>

National Policy Analysis #417, Climate Change and California Assembly Bill 1058: Is it Hype? by Dr. Willie Soon at <http://www.nationalcenter.org/NPA417.html>

National Policy Analysis #446, McCain and Lieberman Join the Ranks of Ecoactivists With New Legislation on Global Warming by Amy Ridenour at <http://www.nationalcenter.org/NPA446.html>

Testimony of Dr. S. Fred Singer, President, The Science and Environmental Policy Project, before the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation on Climate Change, July 18, 2000 at <http://www.nationalcenter.org/KyotoSingerTestimony2000.html>

National Policy Analysis #334, Carbon Dioxide is Good for the Environment by John Carlisle at <http://www.nationalcenter.org/NPA334.html>

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