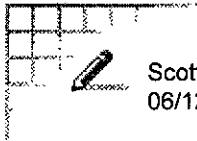


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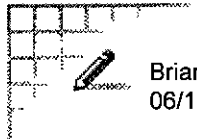


Scott McClellan
06/12/2002 01:15:26 PM

Record Type: Record

To: Samuel A. Thernstrom/CEQ/EOP@EOP, Phil Cooney/CEQ/EOP@EOP
cc:
Subject: Reuters - EPA Chief Not Told About U.S. Climate Change Report

----- Forwarded by Scott McClellan/WHO/EOP on 06/12/2002 01:15 PM -----



Brian Bravo
06/12/2002 01:12:34 PM

Record Type: Record

To:
cc:
Subject: Reuters - EPA Chief Not Told About U.S. Climate Change Report

EPA Chief Not Told About U.S. Climate Change Report

By Tom Doggett

WASHINGTON (Reuters) - Christine Todd Whitman, the top U.S. environmental regulator, said on Wednesday she was not told in advance about a controversial Bush administration report that concluded greenhouse gas emissions produced by human activities were the primary cause of global warming.

The report caused a stir last week among environmentalists because it appeared to put the administration on the side of many scientists who believe that vehicle emissions and pollution from power plants and oil refineries were to blame for rising global temperatures.

The United States is the world's biggest energy consumer and emissions polluter.

President Bush dismissed the report as a product of the federal "bureaucracy." Bush said he had read the report, but the White House later said the president was only briefed on the study.

The report was quietly posted on the Environmental Protection Agency's Web site after it was sent to the United Nations.

While Whitman is the head of the EPA, she said she did not read the report in advance and was not even aware of the study until news organizations reported on it.

"I knew about it when I read it in the paper," she told reporters on Wednesday following a speech at an energy efficiency conference in Washington.

The Bush administration has been repeatedly criticized by the European Union for not doing more to reduce carbon dioxide emissions linked to global warming.

With environmental issues likely to figure in many congressional elections in November, a group

of Senate Democrats last week demanded that the White House clarify if it stood behind the report or not.

Democrats have accused the administration of trying to relax various anti-pollution policies for utility emissions, mining and forestry that are costly to industry. Republicans maintain that more voluntary and market-based programs can achieve the same results.

Green groups have long questioned whether Whitman has a say in setting administration environmental policies, or if those decisions are made by White House officials. Her comments on the climate change report raised more doubt.

"It certainly creates the appearance that she's an absentee landlord at EPA," said Frank O'Donnell, executive director of the Clean Air Trust. "It's starting to look like she's (EPA) administrator in a ceremonial capacity."

WHITMAN SAYS NOTHING NEW IN REPORT

Whitman said she was briefed on the EPA report after it was published.

The report's conclusions were reviewed by the staff of the EPA, the State Department and other agencies before it was published, Whitman said. "Since nobody saw anything earth-shattering in what the conclusions were ... they didn't think they needed to raise the red flag," she said.

Whitman, along with White House officials, have tried to downplay the controversy by citing a speech Bush gave last year when he stated that human activities were a cause of greenhouse gas emissions.

However, the administration's new report went a step further, saying human activities were primarily to blame for global warming and have caused "surface air temperatures and subsurface ocean temperatures to rise."

Environmentalists seized on the report as a major change in Bush administration policy. In the past, green groups pointed out that the administration had said the science was unclear on the causes of global warming.

WHITMAN TO GO TO UN MEETING IN AUGUST

The EPA report is also likely to be discussed at a United Nations-sponsored conference in South Africa this summer on world poverty, global warming and other environmental issues.

The United States is expected to be blasted at the Johannesburg conference by an array of industrialized nations angry that the White House pulled America out of the Kyoto treaty.

Green groups have urged the Bush administration to make the United States re-join the international Kyoto treaty that seeks to reduce the world greenhouse gas emissions by setting nation-by-nation targets.

The administration last year rejected the treaty as too expensive for U.S. industry and instead put forward a program encouraging American companies to voluntarily curb heat-trapping emissions.

The new report's conclusions would not alter administration policy, Whitman said. "We certainly aren't changing our position on Kyoto," she said.

Whitman said she was ready to reiterate the administration's opposition to the Kyoto treaty at the Johannesburg summit to be held Aug. 26 to Sept. 4.

While the members on the U.S. delegation to the conference is still being worked out, Whitman said she wants to be part of the group attending.