

Statement of Speaker Nancy Pelosi
House Committee on Science and Technology
Hearing on the State of Climate Change Science 2007
Thursday, February 8, 2007

“Thank you, Chairman Gordon, for holding this important hearing on the findings of the Fourth Assessment Report by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). Thank you, Ranking Member Hall, and my colleagues on the Science and Technology Committee for your attention to the pressing issue of climate change.

“To the witnesses appearing today, thank you for your extraordinary contributions to our understanding of climate science. Your new report confirms that climate change is indisputably underway and states with 90 percent certainty that greenhouse gases released by human activities are the main cause of global warming.

“You have opened a window into our future. Looking through that window, we see a future in which global warming will reshape our planet and society. We also see a future in which harsh consequences could be blunted by our prompt action.

“The level of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere is by far the highest in 650,000 years. Temperatures are estimated to rise anywhere from 2 degrees Fahrenheit to as high as 11.5 degrees by the end of the century. We can expect rising sea levels, more intense storms, increased drought in some areas and more floods in others, heat waves, spread of tropical diseases, extinction of species, changes in ocean salinity, and melting ice in the polar regions.

“The catastrophic hurricanes of 2005, Katrina and Rita, foreshadow the challenges we will face. All along our coastlines, our great cities and small towns will be threatened by rising sea levels and intensifying storms.

“Not only coastal areas will be affected. Inland communities will be gravely affected as well by drought and flood. Movement of climate change refugees from one country to another could increase political instability in many regions of the world.

“Looking through the window into the future that you have opened, we also see that we can reshape our activities now and prevent catastrophic global warming. Where once we thought the effects of global warming would occur decades away, change is already underway.

“We hold our children’s future in our hands – not our grandchildren, or great-grandchildren, but our own children. As the most adaptable creatures on the planet, it is time for us to adapt.

“Scientific evidence suggests that to prevent the most severe effects of global warming, we will need to cut global greenhouse gas emissions roughly in half from today’s levels

by 2050. The Bush Administration continues to oppose mandatory limits on greenhouse gases, restating this position immediately upon the release of the IPCC report.

“We cannot achieve the transformation we need, both in the United States and throughout the international community, without mandatory action to reduce greenhouse gas pollution. Many of the technologies to revolutionize our use of energy are already at hand, waiting on the shelf, or under development. Restrictions on greenhouse gas emissions will drive these technologies into the marketplace quickly and cost-effectively, while simultaneously creating the next generation of good-paying new jobs.

“In addition, we must address land-use policies in the U.S. and worldwide, since the loss of forests currently contributes about 25 percent of global carbon dioxide emissions. Older forests can store more carbon while also providing fuel for biomass energy in a sustainable manner.

“We have a responsibility to work together with countries such as China to reduce the level of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere. The United States and China are the two largest contributors of carbon dioxide emissions in the world and it is estimated that China will surpass the U.S. in just three years.

“We need to engage the Chinese government by working cooperatively to develop clean and renewable sources of energy.

“I have also asked the committees that have jurisdiction over energy, environment and technology policy to report legislation on these issues by June. We hope to have legislation that will be a starting point on global warming and energy independence through the committees by July 4th, so that this year, Independence Day is also Energy Independence Day.

“We are creating a Select Committee on Energy Independence and Global Warming to raise the visibility of these urgent issues and gather critical information to protect America’s security. The Select Committee will not have legislative jurisdiction, but they will develop recommendations on policies, strategies, technologies and other innovations intended to reduce the dependence of the United States on foreign sources of energy, and to achieve substantial and permanent reductions in emissions and other activities that contribute to climate change and global warming. The Select Committee will share its findings with the legislative committees of the House and with the public, and they will make a special effort to communicate with younger Americans by using the most cutting-edge technology.

“For twelve years, the leadership in the House of Representatives stifled all discussion and debate of global warming. That long rejection of reality is over, to the relief of Members on both sides of the aisle.

“The Bible tells us in the Old Testament, ‘To minister to the needs of God's creation is an act of worship. To ignore those needs is to dishonor the God who made us.’

“There is a growing chorus of voices in favor of taking serious and sustained action on global warming: from scientists to Fortune 100 CEOs, from evangelical Christians to environmentalists, from farmers to hunters and anglers. We will work together, holding hearings, developing legislation, and tackling one of humanity’s greatest challenges yet - global warming.”

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