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HB 549

Open Letter by 18 AGW Alarmists

January 28, 2011

To the Members of the U.S. House of Representatives and the U.S. Senate:

The Importance of Science in Addressing Climate Change

As you begin your deliberations in the new 112th Congress, we urge you to take a fresh look at climate change. Climate change is not just an environmental threat but, as we describe below, also poses challenges to the U.S. economy, national security and public health.

Some view climate change as a futuristic abstraction. Others are unsure about the science, or uncertain about the policy responses. We want to assure you that the science is strong and that there is nothing abstract about the risks facing our Nation. Our coastal areas are now facing increasing dangers from rising sea levels and storm surges; the southwest and southeast are increasingly vulnerable to drought; other regions will need to prepare for massive flooding from the extreme storms of the sort being experienced with increasing frequency. These and other consequences of climate change all require that we plan and prepare. Our military recognizes that the consequences of climate change have direct security implications for the country that will only become more acute with time, and it has begun the sort of planning required across the board.

The health of Americans is also at risk. The U.S. Climate Impacts Report, commissioned by the George W. Bush administration, states: "Climate change poses unique challenges to human health. Unlike health threats caused by a particular toxin or disease pathogen, there are many ways that climate change can lead to potentially harmful health effects. There are direct health impacts from heat waves and severe storms, ailments caused or exacerbated by air pollution and airborne allergens, and many climate-sensitive infectious diseases."

As with the fiscal deficit, the changing climate is the kind of daunting problem that we, as a nation, would like to wish away. However, as with our growing debt, the longer we wait to address climate change, the worse it gets. Heat-trapping carbon dioxide is building up in the atmosphere because burning coal, oil, and natural gas produces far more carbon dioxide than is absorbed by oceans and forests. No scientist disagrees with that. Our carbon debt increases each year, just as our national debt increases each year that spending exceeds revenue. And our carbon debt is even longer-lasting; carbon dioxide molecules can last hundreds of years in the atmosphere.

The Science of Climate Change

It is not our role as scientists to determine how to deal with problems like climate change. That is a policy matter and rightly must be left to our elected leaders in discussion with all Americans. But, as scientists, we have an obligation to evaluate, report, and explain the science behind climate change.

The debate about climate change has become increasingly ideological and partisan. But climate change is not the product of a belief system or ideology. Instead, it is based on scientific fact, and no amount of argument, coercion, or debate among talking heads in the media can alter the physics of climate change.

Political philosophy has a legitimate role in policy debates, but not in the underlying climate science. There are no Democratic or Republican carbon dioxide molecules; they are all invisible and they all trap heat.

The fruits of the scientific process are worthy of your trust. This was perhaps best summed up in recent testimony before Congress by Dr. Peter Gleick, co-founder and director of the Pacific Institute and member of the U.S. National Academy of Sciences. He testified that the scientific process "is inherently adversarial – scientists build reputations and gain recognition not only for supporting conventional wisdom, but even more so for demonstrating that the scientific consensus is wrong and that there is a better explanation. That's what Galileo, Pasteur, Darwin, and Einstein did. But no one who argues against the science of climate change has ever provided an alternative scientific theory that adequately satisfies the observable evidence or conforms to our understanding of physics, chemistry, and climate dynamics."

National Academy of Sciences

What we know today about human-induced climate change is the result of painstaking research and analysis, some of it going back more than a century. Major international scientific organizations in disciplines ranging from geophysics to geology, atmospheric sciences to biology, and physics to human health – as well as every one of the leading national scientific academies worldwide – have concluded that human activity is changing the climate. This is not a "belief." Instead, it is an objective evaluation of the scientific evidence.

The U.S. National Academy of Sciences (NAS) was created by Abraham Lincoln and chartered by Congress in 1863 for the express purpose of obtaining objective expert advice on a range of complex scientific and technological issues. Its international reputation for integrity is unparalleled. This spring, at the request of Congress, the NAS issued a series of comprehensive reports on climate change that were unambiguous.

The NAS stated, "Climate change is occurring, is caused largely by human activities . . . and in many cases is already affecting a broad range of human and natural systems." This conclusion comes as no surprise to the overwhelming majority of working climate scientists.

Climate Change Deniers

Climate change deniers cloak themselves in scientific language, selectively critiquing aspects of mainstream climate science. Sometimes they present alternative hypotheses as an explanation of a particular point, as if the body of evidence were a house of cards standing or falling on one detail; but the edifice of climate science instead rests on a concrete foundation. As an open letter from 255 NAS members noted in the May 2010 Science magazine, no research results have

produced any evidence that challenges the overall scientific understanding of what is happening to our planet's climate and why.

The assertions of climate deniers therefore should not be given scientific weight equal to the comprehensive, peer-reviewed research presented by the vast majority of climate scientists.

The determination of policy sits with you, the elected representatives of the people. But we urge you, as our elected representatives, to base your policy decisions on sound science, not sound bites. Congress needs to understand that scientists have concluded, based on a systematic review of all of the evidence, that climate change caused by human activities raises serious risks to our national and economic security and our health both here and around the world. It's time for Congress to move on to the policy debate.

How Can We Move Forward?

Congress should, we believe, hold hearings to understand climate science and what it says about the likely costs and benefits of action and inaction. It should not hold hearings to attempt to intimidate scientists or to substitute ideological judgments for scientific ones. We urge our elected leaders to work together to focus the nation on what the science is telling us, particularly with respect to impacts now occurring around the country.

Already, there is far more carbon in the air than at any time in human history, with more being generated every day. Climate change is underway and the severity of the risks we face is compounded by delay.

We look to you, our representatives, to address the challenge of climate change, and lead the national response. We and our colleagues are prepared to assist you as you work to develop a rational and practical national policy to address this important issue.

Thank you for your attention.

Sincerely,

John Abraham, University of St. Thomas
Barry Bickmore, Brigham Young University
Gretchen Daily,* Stanford University
G. Brent Dalrymple,* Oregon State University
Andrew Dessler, Texas A&M University
Peter Gleick,* Pacific Institute
John Kutzbach,* University of Wisconsin-Madison
Syukuro Manabe,* Princeton University
Michael Mann, Penn State University
Pamela Matson,* Stanford University
Harold Mooney,* Stanford University
Michael Oppenheimer, Princeton University
Ben Santer, Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory

Richard Somerville, Scripps Institution of Oceanography
Kevin Trenberth, National Center for Atmospheric Research
Warren Washington, National Center for Atmospheric Research
Gary Yohe, Wesleyan University
George Woodwell,* The Woods Hole Research Center

*Member of the National Academy of Sciences

Responding Open Letter by Climate Scientists

The Truth About Climate Change Open Letter:

Open Letter to the United States Congress

8 February 2011

To the Members of the U.S. House of Representatives and the U.S. Senate:

In reply to "The Importance of Science in Addressing Climate Change"

On 28 January 2011, eighteen scientists sent a letter (see also this news story) to members of the U.S. House of Representatives and the U.S. Senate urging them to "take a fresh look at climate change." Their intent, apparently, was to disparage the views of scientists who disagree with their contention that continued business-as-usual increases in carbon dioxide (CO2) emissions produced from the burning of coal, gas, and oil will lead to a host of cataclysmic climate-related problems.

We, the undersigned, totally disagree with them and would like to take this opportunity to briefly state our side of the story.

The eighteen climate alarmists (as we refer to them, not derogatorily, but simply because they view themselves as "sounding the alarm" about so many things climatic) state that the people of the world "need to prepare for massive flooding from the extreme storms of the sort being experienced with increasing frequency," as well as the "direct health impacts from heat waves" and "climate-sensitive infectious diseases," among a number of other devastating phenomena. And they say that "no research results have produced any evidence that challenges the overall scientific understanding of what is happening to our planet's climate," which is understood to mean their view of what is happening to Earth's climate.

To these statements, however, we take great exception. It is the eighteen climate alarmists who appear to be unaware of "what is happening to our planet's climate," as well as the vast amount of research that has produced that knowledge.

For example, a lengthy review of their claims and others that climate alarmists frequently make can be found on the Web site of the Center for the Study of Carbon Dioxide and Global Change (see Carbon Dioxide and Earth's Future: Pursuing the Prudent Path). That report offers a point-by-point rebuttal of all of the claims of the "group of eighteen," citing in every case peer-reviewed scientific research on the actual effects of climate change during the past several decades.

If the "group of eighteen" pleads ignorance of this information due to its very recent posting, then we call their attention to an even larger and more comprehensive report published in 2009, *Climate Change Reconsidered: The 2009 Report of the Nongovernmental International Panel on*

Climate Change (NIPCC). That document has been posted for more than a year in its entirety at http://www.nipccreport.org.

These are just two recent compilations of scientific research among many we could cite. Do the 678 scientific studies referenced in the CO2 Science document, or the thousands of studies cited in the NIPCC report, provide real-world evidence (as opposed to theoretical climate model predictions) for global warming-induced increases in the worldwide number and severity of floods? No. In the global number and severity of droughts? No. In the number and severity of hurricanes and other storms? No.

Do they provide any real-world evidence of Earth's seas inundating coastal lowlands around the globe? No. Increased human mortality? No. Plant and animal extinctions? No. Declining vegetative productivity? No. More frequent and deadly coral bleaching? No. Marine life dissolving away in acidified oceans? No.

Quite to the contrary, in fact, these reports provide extensive empirical evidence that these things are not happening. And in many of these areas, the referenced papers report finding just the opposite response to global warming, i.e., biosphere-friendly effects of rising temperatures and rising CO2 levels.

In light of the profusion of actual observations of the workings of the real world showing little or no negative effects of the modest warming of the second half of the twentieth century, and indeed growing evidence of positive effects, we find it incomprehensible that the eighteen climate alarmists could suggest something so far removed from the truth as their claim that no research results have produced any evidence that challenges their view of what is happening to Earth's climate and weather.

But don't take our word for it. Read the two reports yourselves. And then make up your own minds about the matter. Don't be intimidated by false claims of "scientific consensus" or "overwhelming proof." These are not scientific arguments and they are simply not true.

Like the eighteen climate alarmists, we urge you to take a fresh look at climate change. We believe you will find that it is not the horrendous environmental threat they and others have made it out to be, and that they have consistently exaggerated the negative effects of global warming on the U.S. economy, national security, and public health, when such effects may well be small to negligible.

Signed by,

Syun-Ichi Akasofu, University of Alaska[1]
Scott Armstrong, University of Pennsylvania
James Barrante, Southern Connecticut State University[1]
Richard Becherer, University of Rochester
John Boring, University of Virginia
Roger Cohen, American Physical Society Fellow
David Douglass, University of Rochester

Don Easterbrook, Western Washington University[1]
Robert Essenhigh, The Ohio State University[1]
Martin Fricke, Senior Fellow, American Physical Society
Lee Gerhard, University of Kansas[1]
Ulrich Gerlach, The Ohio State University
Laurence Gould, University of Hartford
Bill Gray, Colorado State University[1]
Will Happer, Princeton University[2]
Howard Hayden, University of Connecticut[1]
Craig Idso, Center for the Study of Carbon Dioxide and Global Change
Sherwood Idso, USDA, U.S. Water Conservation Laboratory[1]
Richard Keen, University of Colorado
Doral Kemper, USDA, Agricultural Research Service[1]
Hugh Kendrick, Office of Nuclear Reactor Programs, DOE[1]
Richard Lindzen, Massachusetts Institute of Technology[2]
Anthony Lupo, University of Missouri
Patrick Michaels, Cato Institute
Donald Nielsen, University of California, Davis[1]
Al Pekarek, St. Cloud State University
John Rhoads, Midwestern State University[1]
Nicola Scafetta, Duke University
Gary Sharp, Center for Climate/Ocean Resources Study
S. Fred Singer, University of Virginia[1]
Roy Spencer, University of Alabama
George Taylor, Past President, American Association of State Climatologists
Frank Tipler, Tulane University
Leonard Weinstein, National Institute of Aerospace Senior Research Fellow
Samuel Werner, University of Missouri[1]
Thomas Wolfram, University of Missouri[1]

1 – Emeritus or Retired
2 – Member of the National Academy of Sciences

Endorsed by:

Rodney Armstrong, Geophysicist
Edwin Berry, Certified Consulting Meteorologist
Joseph Bevelacqua, Bevelacqua Resources
Carmen Catanese, American Physical Society Member
Roy Clark, Ventura Photonics
John Coleman, Meteorologist KUSI TV
Darrell Connelly, Geophysicist
Joseph D'Aleo, Certified Consulting Meteorologist
Terry Donze, Geophysicist[1]
Mike Dubrasich, Western Institute for Study of the Environment
John Dunn, American Council on Science and Health of NYC

Dick Flygare, QEP Resources
Michael Fox, Nuclear industry/scientist
Gordon Fulks, Gordon Fulks and Associates
Ken Haapala, Science & Environmental Policy Project
Martin Hertzberg, Bureau of Mines[1]
Art Horn, Meteorologist
Keith Idso, Center for the Study of Carbon Dioxide and Global Change
Jay Lehr, The Heartland Institute
Robert Lerine, Industrial and Defense Research and Engineering[1]
Peter Link, Geologist
James Macdonald, Chief Meteorologist for the Travelers Weather Service[1]
Roger Matson, Society of Independent Professional Earth Scientists
Tony Pann, Meteorologist WBAL TV
Ned Rasor, Consulting Physicist
James Rogers, Geologist[1]
Norman Rogers, National Association of Scholars
Thomas Sheahen, Western Technology Incorporated
Andrew Spurlock, Starfire Engineering and Technologies, Inc.
Leighton Steward, PlantsNeedCO2.org
Soames Summerhays, Summerhays Films, Inc.
Charles Touhill, Consulting Environmental Engineer
David Wojick, Climatechangedebate.org

1 – Emeritus or Retired