

Clean Water Action • Clear the Air • Climate Crisis Coalition • Environmental Working Group
Friends of the Earth • Greenpeace • League of Conservation Voters • National Audubon Society
National Environmental Trust • Natural Resources Defense Council
Physicians for Social Responsibility • The Clean Energy Partnership
The Sierra Club • The Vote Solar Initiative
Union of Concerned Scientists • US PIRG

April 3, 2006

Dear Senators Bingaman and Domenici,

As representatives of the nation's leading environmental and public health organizations, we are united by our shared concern with the United States' continuing failure to respond meaningfully to global warming, one of the most serious challenges humankind has ever faced. We commend you for your leadership in advancing the discussion on this issue by introducing last year's Senate resolution, *Sense of the Senate on Climate Change*, which calls for a mandatory program to reduce global warming pollution. We further commend your efforts this year, through the Energy Committee's white paper and workshop, to spur a more concrete discussion on how to design such legislation.

As the Energy Committee proceeds with this effort, it is critical to properly frame the discussions of *how* a mandatory federal program is designed, by an understanding of *what the goal* of such a program should be.

The opportunity to stabilize greenhouse gas concentrations at safe levels is closing quickly. While many of the most dire effects of global warming may be decades in the future, we have begun to see the impacts already. Leading scientists now warn that we have very little chance of limiting global warming to 2 degrees Celsius, and avoiding the most dangerous impacts of global warming, unless we begin within the next 10 years to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from today's levels.

New evidence of the urgent threat posed by global warming emerges almost daily, much of it describing unprecedented changes at the poles. This year, sea ice has failed to re-form in the Arctic for the second year in a row. Recent studies suggest that global sea levels could rise substantially during the next few centuries because of this accelerating melting in Greenland and Antarctica. In February, scientists reported additional evidence that Greenland's glaciers are melting twice as fast as previously believed. The evidence of unexpected changes in the Western Antarctic ice sheet is raising fears among scientists that catastrophic disintegration is possible.

We know the current threat posed by global warming is not confined to the polar regions. New studies provide further evidence that the intensity of hurricanes will increase with global warming, as will the risks to southeastern coastal communities exposed to those hurricanes.

The devastation wrought by Hurricane Katrina is a grim reminder of our vulnerability to such storms, enhanced by warmer ocean temperatures and rising sea levels.

To date, America's leadership on global warming has not come from the president or Congress, but from governors, state legislators, mayors, business people and, most recently, religious leaders. While federal action has languished, states and cities have pushed ahead with policies to reduce global warming. The states, responding to the urgency of the situation, have adopted greenhouse gas limits for cars and light trucks, renewable energy policies, energy efficiency standards and even set up regional caps on carbon dioxide emissions.

As the Senate considers how to design a mandatory program to reduce global warming pollution we want to highlight the need to ensure that any domestic cap and trade program can link with other regional or international programs. The inclusion of a "safety valve" or unlimited access to offsets will undermine the cap and create obstacles to linking with other systems. In addition, the proceeds from the trading program need to be directed toward public purposes like energy efficiency, reducing the costs to consumers, and accelerating the transition to less carbon-intensive fuels.

It is time for the Senate to turn last year's *Sense of the Senate on Climate Change* into bold and meaningful action. Scientists warn us nearly every day that there is no time to waste. Thankfully there are a wealth of solutions to global warming that will enhance our national and energy security while stimulating innovation, job growth and our overall economy. Citizens, businesses, cities and states are implementing these solutions every day, but we need to do much more. Only the federal government can turn these local and regional solutions into national action. We implore the Senate to act before it is too late.

Thank you for your consideration.

CC: Members of the United States Senate

Sincerely,

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