

TESTIMONY of SENATOR CHUCK HAGEL
U.S. Senate Commerce Committee Hearing on Climate Change

"Thank you, Mr. Chairman for the opportunity to come before your committee and discuss an issue that I have been deeply involved in over the past several years.

I have come across few issues more complex than climate change. What exactly is happening? What is the science? Are the actions of humans having an impact? What do we do?

None of these questions have simple answers. In fact, the most truthful answer to all of them is we don't know. We do know that there has been climate change since the beginning of time. In fact, very radical climate change long before the Industrial Revolution or the combustion engine. Climate change is not new.

In addressing this complicated issue, I start with this premise. Debate over climate change is not a question of who is for or against the environment. We all support protecting our environment. I have yet to meet a Senator, or any public official, who wants to leave dirty air, dirty water, or a degraded environment as the legacy for his or her children.

Over the last three months, the three scientific working groups of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) have released thousands of pages of their work for the IPCC's Third Assessment. The summaries of those reports are written not by the scientists, but by UN environmental activists. There's a reason the organization is called the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. The summaries are political documents, drafted by government representatives after intense negotiating sessions. In some cases, the very people sent to represent their countries in the writing of the IPCC summaries are later working to negotiate the provisions of the Kyoto Protocol. So you have the same people defining the problem who are also trying to create a solution. The working group reports vary widely in their scientific conclusions and predictions for global warming during the next century, but the summaries tend to take very alarmist viewpoints which are then used to justify the draconian measures of the Kyoto Protocol. The IPCC summaries aren't science, they're UN politics.

Furthermore, the predictions made by the IPCC are based on computer models, which have already been shown to be inadequate and vary widely in their interpretations. The National Research Council recently issued a report called "The Science of Regional and Global Change." In that they discussed the

abilities of current climate models: "The United States today does not have the computational and modeling capabilities needed to serve society's information needs for reliable environmental predictions and projections."

This is what the Clinton Administration's Environmental Protection Agency had to say about computer climate models: "Virtually all published estimates of how climate could change in the U.S. are the result of computer models....These complicated models...are still not accurate enough to provide reliable forecasts on how the climate may change; and several models often yield contradictory results."

We know that the earth's climate has for thousands of years gone through cycles of warming and cooling. Ice core samples from Greenland more than 2 miles deep, dating back more than 100,000 years, have shown dramatic fluctuations in the earth's temperature. Since the end of the last Ice Age 11,000 years ago, when the earth was 12.6 degrees Fahrenheit colder than today, there have been several warming and cooling periods.

Over the last 100 years surface temperatures have increased by approximately 1 degree Fahrenheit. However, most of that increase in surface temperature occurred before 1940 - yet 80 percent of the manmade carbon dioxide was emitted after 1940.

Furthermore, while temperatures on the earth's surface have risen slightly over the last two decades, satellite temperatures - which are far more accurate - have shown no warming over the last 20 years. In fact, from 1979 to 1997, satellites temperatures showed a slight cooling trend of .04 degrees Fahrenheit.

Even the scientist most associated with global warming, Dr. James Hansen, the Director NASA's Goddard Institute for Space Studies, who you will be hearing from later, issued a new analysis last year which said the emphasis on carbon dioxide emissions may be misplaced.

In 1988, Dr. Hansen testified before a Senate committee that human activities were causing global warming. In his report last August, he found that manmade emissions of carbon dioxide have already been falling, they shrank in 1998 and 1999. In this report, he stated that other greenhouse gases - such as methane, black soot, "cfc"s, and the compounds that create smog - may be causing more damage than carbon dioxide and efforts to affect climate change should focus on these other gases because the technology already exists to capture many of them. "The prospects for having a modest climate impact instead of a disastrous one are quite good, I think," Dr. Hansen was quoted as saying in the New York Times on August 19, 2000.

Other preeminent climatologists and meteorologists have conducted studies which have offered credible alternatives for the causes of our warming trend. Dr. Sallie Baliunas, the Director of Science Programs at the Harvard-Smithsonian Center for Astrophysics, has been able to closely correlate changes in the sun's brightness with temperature changes on earth. Unlike climate models, her studies have been able to explain why most of the earth's warming in the last 100 years occurred before significant growth in man-made greenhouse gas emissions. According to her work, solar activity may be the most direct factor in global warming.

We know that we are far from understanding the dynamics of our climate and what stimulates the changes it undergoes. Increasing research and intensifying our scientific effort will help lead us to clearer answers to the questions - what is going on and what is causing it? In the last Congress, Senators Murkowski, Craig and I introduced legislation that would dramatically increase funding for research. I would like to thank you, Mr. Chairman, and your fellow Commerce Committee members Senators Dorgan, Brownback, Burns and Smith for cosponsoring that legislation. We will be updating and re-introducing this legislation in the next few weeks.

So, what do we do about climate change? Nothing? No, that would be irresponsible.

However, it would have been equally irresponsible to submit this nation to a treaty that would have had a disastrous effect on our economy without having any real impact on global emissions of greenhouse gases.

When President Bush said the Kyoto Protocol dead he was merely stated the obvious. This treaty would never have been in a position to be ratified by the U.S. Senate. The Clinton-Gore Administration knew this as well and never submitted the treaty to the Senate for debate and consideration.

Despite the heated rhetoric on this issue from the other side of the Atlantic, no major industrialized nation has ratified the Kyoto Protocol. In fact, Australia has said it will follow us in rejecting the treaty.

There's a reason for that. The Kyoto Protocol left out 134 nations, including some of the largest greenhouse gas emitters in the world - nations like China, India, South Korea, Brazil and others.

Mr. Chairman, I know you're fond of references to the movie "Weekend at Bernie's." The Kyoto Protocol has been dead for a long time, but we've been

putting on the green eye shades and propping it up.

In the meantime, we've lost precious time where we could have been looking at achievable ways to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

What should we do?

President Bush's interagency task force reviewing this issue has been listening to and learning from some of the foremost meteorologists and scientists in informal meetings. He has said that his Administration will offer a relevant, science based, realistic alternative to Kyoto. That is the responsible thing to do.

The United States is still a party to the Framework Convention on Climate Change (Rio Treaty), which was signed by the United States and ratified by the U.S. Senate in 1992. We should go back to the framework of that treaty, before the Berlin Mandate of 1994 that excluded developing countries from participation, and lay the groundwork for future international efforts.

If we are creative and if our partners will work with us in good faith, we can negotiate arrangements that are responsible, proactive and realistic. I noted with interest the comments last week by Senators Daschle and Schumer, who, at least initially, indicated their willingness to consider alternative voluntary approaches. This is the spirit in which climate change consensus will be reached.

The United States will need to demonstrate a commitment to act domestically before it will be able to build international support for action absent the Kyoto Protocol. It is in our best interest to create a domestic agenda that will reduce greenhouse gas emissions without the heavy hand of government mandates. A forward-looking domestic policy will demonstrate our commitment, enhance what we genuinely know about climate change, create more efficient energy sources, and have the additional effect of reducing air pollutants.

Mr. Chairman, climate change is a serious issue that deserves serious consideration. As I stated earlier, our colleagues Senators Murkowski, Craig and I along with others will soon reintroduce legislation to improve our scientific knowledge and lay out positive steps that we can take now to address climate change.