

Statement for Commerce Committee Hearing on Climate Change  
July 10, 2001

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you for holding this hearing today, as this is an appropriate follow up to the climate change hearings Ranking Member McCain has held both in the 106<sup>th</sup> Congress and in the 107<sup>th</sup>, the latest being this past May. This committee does have a large responsibility in the oversight of the climate change issue and I'm pleased to see that responsibility being exercised.

In Senator McCain's hearings, we heard from renowned scientists with varying opinions on global warming, and just weeks ago, and at the President's request, a well respected and balanced panel of U.S. scientists came out with a report that there is strong evidence that warming over the past 50 years is attributable to human activities, and significant increases in global temperatures and sea level can be projected. I believe this National Academy of Science Report is the wake up call for many who have not yet gotten engaged in the issue of climate change as we now have a growing collective picture of a warming world over the past century. Climate change is a perilous environmental problem that deserves to be addressed on both the domestic and international level.

It appears clear that regional climate changes, particularly temperature changes, are affecting physical and biological systems. Many human systems, the scientists say, are sensitive to climate change, and the potential for large scale and possibly irreversible impacts pose risks that have yet to be quantified. We must recognize that those around the globe with the least resources have the least capacity to adapt and are the most vulnerable to these changing climate processes.

The United States had a large part in the development of a climate change convention treaty at the "Earth Summit" in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. President George H. Bush went on to sign the UNFCCC Treaty and it was unanimously ratified by the U.S. Senate. I believe Congress' prudent response to climate change is to work for the adoption a portfolio of clear and concise U.S. actions aimed at mitigation, adaptation, and research as the issue is one with unique long-term effects involving complex interactions between climatic, environmental, economic, political,

institutional, social and technological processes.

As one of the many pieces we can consider, I would like to suggest support for a simple change - the Feinstein-Snowe bill that closes the SUV loophole by raising the fuel efficiency, or CAFÉ, standards for "light truck" vehicles to meet those expected of passenger vehicles. The overall fuel economy of new cars and trucks sold in America, after improving slightly a year ago, has dropped back to the lowest levels since 1980, mainly because of the lower fuel efficiency standards currently set for the popular SUVs and minivans.

It is estimated that fixing the SUV loophole will save one million barrels of oil a day, reduce oil imports by 10 percent, cut America's trade deficit - oil deficits are the largest of this -- save consumers money at the gas pump, and provide healthier and cleaner air benefits, and, very importantly, prevent more than 200 million tons of carbon dioxide - the major greenhouse gas connected to global warming - from going into the atmosphere. This legislation is under the jurisdiction of the Commerce Committee and I urge the Chair to hold a hearing on the Feinstein-Snowe bill.

I have asked the Administration for support of the SUV loophole bill as one way to move toward reducing our carbon dioxide emissions, and I look forward to hearing about what the Administration's strategies are as we work through the domestic and international issues relating to climate change.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.