



THE WEEKLY CLOSER

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QUOTE OF THE WEEK...

“The alarmist language used to discuss climate change is tantamount to ‘climate porn’, offering a thrilling spectacle but ultimately distancing the public from the problem, according to new research published today by the Institute for Public Policy Research (ippr)... The report argues that the discussion on climate change in the UK is confusing, contradictory and chaotic...”

Institute for Public Policy Research Press Release

Warm Words: How are we telling the climate story and can we tell it better?
August 3, 2006

DEMOCRATS OBSTRUCT ANOTHER HIGHLY QUALIFIED EPA NOMINEE

Senator Inhofe blasted Democrats use of a highly unusual procedural move to obstruct William Wehrum to head the Environment Protection Agency (EPA) Office of Air and Radiation. The Senate Environment and Public Works Committee favorably reported Mr. Wehrum out of committee back on April 26, 2006. Because of Senate Democrats procedural move, Mr. Wehrum must now be re-nominated by the President, further delaying the progress of improving our nation's air quality.

“Senate Democrat's obstructionist tactics of Mr. Wehrum's nomination is simply despicable. It is outrageous that Democrats used a little used procedural move to further delay a highly qualified EPA nominee in Bill Wehrum. Since Mr. Wehrum began his tenure at the EPA, air pollution has dropped 12%. Mr. Wehrum worked to help craft legislation designed to reduce power plant pollution by 70% - the most dramatic reduction in power plant emissions ever required. When the legislation was blocked by Democrats over an unrelated issue, he helped craft a collection of Clean Air rules to accomplish as much of the reductions as allowed under the current Clean Air Act. Together, these rules will dramatically reduce pollution from older, dirtier power plants. One of these rules represents the first time ever that mercury emissions have been regulated. In addition, Mr. Wehrum helped craft the diesel rules now going into effect, which will virtually eliminate sulfur emissions from diesel engines, cutting emissions by 97%. These rules will not only make the black soot coming out of buses and trucks a thing of the past; it will do the same thing for construction and other off-road equipment.

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“The bottom line is that the air is cleaner because of this Administration’s policies, and in large part thanks to Bill Wehrum. The only thing that has become dirtier is the partisan games Senator Reid and the Democrats are playing with the environment.”

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OPENING STATEMENT: HEARING ON TOXIC SUBSTANCES CONTROL ACT AND THE CHEMICALS MANAGEMENT PROGRAM AT EPA

Wednesday, August 2, 2006

Good morning. Today’s hearing is a very important one. The Committee has not held a hearing on the chemicals management program at EPA in more than 10 years.

There are many people who come to this hearing with a preconceived notion that the US chemicals management program is broken and that Congress needs to completely rewrite the Toxic Substance Control Act (TSCA). I do not come into this hearing with that assumption and I look forward to hearing from the witnesses how they believe the statute and the program are working. However, it is important to take a look at how our environmental statutes are being put into practice, which is why shining light on EPA implementation of TSCA with this hearing is so important. Government bureaucracies only work well when there is Congressional oversight.

The chemical industry is a crucial part of the US economy. The United States is the number one chemical producer in the world, generating \$550 billion a year and putting more than \$5 million people to work. More than 96% of all manufactured goods are directly touched by chemistry.

Chemicals are the essential building blocks of products that safely and effectively prevent, treat and cure disease; ensure the safest and most abundant food supply in the world; purify our drinking water and put out fires. They are the foundation for life-saving vaccines, child safety seats, bicycle helmets, home insulation, and Kevlar vests. Innovations in chemistry have helped to increase energy efficiency and to make planes, fighter jets, satellites and space shuttles safer and more secure. We are also on the cusp of new and exciting chemical advances in the form of nanotechnology. These tiny chemicals have the potential to cure cancers, clean up pollution, and make cars stronger and lighter than ever before. To say that chemicals are vital is an understatement.

There are those that suggest the mere presence of chemicals in our bodies is cause for alarm. However, the Centers for Disease Control in its biennial report on ***Human Exposure to Environmental Chemicals*** states, “just because people have an environmental chemical in their blood or urine does not mean that the chemical causes disease. The toxicity of a chemical is related to its concentration in addition to a person’s individual susceptibility.” In other words, the dose makes the poison and even then it depends on each person’s vulnerability to disease.

To further underscore this point, here is the label of a children's multi-vitamin. Several of the nutrients listed here are considered heavy metals by the Agency for Toxic Substance and Disease Registry yet they are essential for healthy living. Take for example: copper. It is essential for forming red blood cells and boosts your body's ability to mend tissue and break down sugars. But it is also regulated as a secondary drinking water contaminant because of associations with liver and kidney damage at high doses. Or Vitamin D an important nutrient added to milk. Too much Vitamin D may lead to kidney stones, high blood pressure, etc. So, again, we need to be scientific, not alarmist, about the risks chemicals pose.

This is not to say that we should ignore human health and environmental risks if they do, based on scientific evidence, exist. For nearly 30 years, chemical products have been among the most thoroughly evaluated and regulated, covered by more than a dozen federal laws, including TSCA. These statutes are centered on the concept of regulating substances based on risk. I do not believe American chemicals innovation should be stifled by government regulation without the clear identification of risk. We need to ensure that we regulate chemicals based on demonstrated risk not the just the perception or assumption of it. That "precautionary" concept is one that I cannot support.

In reviewing the statute and its legislative history it appears that the Congress was very deliberate in the powers it granted EPA under TSCA and appropriately balanced them with burdens on the private sector. For example, TSCA gives EPA the power to limit or prohibit the manufacture and distribution of a substance if it is found to pose an unreasonable risk. Chemical product makers are required to submit information on all newly developed chemicals BEFORE they are even manufactured. If EPA has concerns, it has the power to mandate testing and then to control or ban it. In nearly 30 years, EPA estimates that 20,000 new chemicals have gone into commercial production by going through the new chemicals review process and never over the objection of EPA.

EPA has also created effective new programs to ensure that we have chemical safety data on those existing chemicals that are produced or imported in the US in large quantities. This program is called the High Production Volume (HPV) Challenge program and covers approximately 95% of current US chemical production and use by volume. Through the program, seventeen types of information are being collected, including physical-chemical properties, environmental fate, and human and aquatic organism toxicity. This information is identical to the internationally-agreed upon Screening Information Data Sets, established by the 30 nations of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development.

There is no shortage of strong feelings when it comes to chemicals and how they are regulated and managed. I look forward to hearing from our witnesses today regarding the success of the chemicals program at EPA and its principal statute. And perhaps we will uncover implementation problems that this committee, exercising its oversight, can encourage the Agency to rectify.

OPENING STATEMENT: SUBCOMMITTEE HEARING ON THE UNITED STATES SUPREME COURT RAPANOS/CARABELL DECISION

Tuesday, August 01, 2006

First, I want to thank Chairman Chafee for holding this subcommittee hearing on the effects of the recent Supreme Court decisions. Federal authority to regulate discharges into “waters of the U.S.” rests on the Constitution’s Commerce Clause. The discharge must in some way impact interstate navigable waters. Many have sought to broaden this authority in the name of protecting the environment. However well-intentioned they may be, those who seek to expand federal jurisdiction must do so within the bounds of the Constitution.

We have wrestled unnecessarily with how to define the point at which the Corps and EPA exceed not just Congressional intent but Constitutional limitations since passage of the Act in 1972. In its most recent decisions on the matter, the Supreme Court has clearly sought to rein in the Corps and narrow federal jurisdiction. In the 2001 SWANCC, the Court struck down the Corps’ jurisdiction over nonnavigable, isolated, intrastate wetlands. However, the Corps and EPA failed to issue new regulations reflecting the Corps decision instead pursuing case-by-case analyses for these areas.

In June of this year, the Court again visited the question of where the limits on federal control over local land use decisions lie. While the Court did not go as far as I believe it should have, in its Rapanos decision, the Court ruled that the Corps had overstepped its authority by regulating areas as wetlands over which it has no jurisdiction. The plurality issued a strong defense of the Constitution. Justice Kennedy agreed that the Corps had overreached and sent the case back to the sixth circuit for rehearing. In doing so, Justice Kennedy stated, “[the dissent] concludes that the ambiguity in the phrase ‘navigable waters’ allows the Corps to construe the statute as reaching all ‘non-isolated wetlands’. . . This, though, seems incorrect.”

The Clean Water Act in addition to protecting navigable waters also protects the rights of the states to regulate and oversee waters within their borders. State and local governments are fully able to step in and protect these water bodies as they see fit. Indeed, in most cases this is the most appropriate means of protecting these areas. There are state and local environmental regulatory programs for isolated waters in 35 states. While many would argue that these are lacking resources, states have not stepped up to protect these areas because they have not needed to. They have yielded their authority to a federal bureaucracy all too eager to expand its power to regulate local land use. This trend must be reversed.

Most of these intrastate, nonnavigable areas are on private property. Behind me are some pictures of these intrastate nonnavigable areas. I say areas because you will notice that most of them are dry. The Constitution protects the right of the property owner to develop that property as he sees fit. The determination that a dry wash is a wetland immediately devalues that the land

and infringes on the right of the individual to use his land. Numerous state and local permits and regulations govern, as appropriate, the development of these properties. The decision on how to use these resources most appropriately belongs at the state and local levels of government where land use and community planning decisions belong.

For those who might argue, that this is just those property rights people being paranoid, here is a quote from a letter that EPA Region 9 recently sent to the area Corps office arguing that more federal intrusion was needed into development projects that have the support of the local communities and the state in which they are planned, "Through our permitting programs, the federal government is playing a central role [in this development]." It is not the right or responsibility of the federal government to play a central role in any development. How we define "waters of the U.S." is critical to protecting the rights of citizens, local governments and states to regulate the use of their lands. I hope the EPA and the Corps will issue a new definition consistent with the Rapanos/Carabel decision that fully accounts for the constitutional limitations on their authority.

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DID YOU KNOW?

NEW YORK TIMES OP-ED HEAT WAVE HYPE MELTS UNDER SCRUTINY

The August 3 *New York Times* op-ed by Bob Herbert titled "Hot Enough Yet," makes several dubious global warming claims. See: <http://select.nytimes.com/2006/08/03/opinion/03herbert.html?hp> Herbert promotes the idea that the recent heat wave that has swept across the United States is another example of human caused catastrophic global warming. But the facts do not support this latest example of climate hysteria.

Claim: Herbert implies that the recent heat wave hitting the eastern United States is somehow evidence of global warming.

Fact: The recent heat wave hitting Mid-Atlantic States is nowhere close to breaking record temperatures set in 1930 – almost 60 years before fears of human caused catastrophic global warming began. "That summer has never been approached, and it's not going to be approached this year," said the state of Virginia's climatologist Patrick Michaels. See: <http://www.cnsnews.com/ViewNation.asp?Page=/Nation/archive/200608/NAT20060804c.html>

In addition, even climate alarmist, NASA scientist James Hansen, rebuffs any attempts to tie any single weather event to global warming. "I am a little concerned about this, in the sense that we are still at a point where the natural fluctuations of climate are still large -- at least, the natural fluctuations of weather compared to long-term climate change," Hansen, director of the agency's Goddard Institute for Space Studies, told reporters

in April 2006.

Claim: Herbert wrote: “We should keep in mind, as Al Gore has pointed out, that of the 21 hottest years ever measured, 20 have occurred within the last 25 years. And the hottest year of this recent hottest wave was last year.”

Fact: According to official temperature records of the Climate Research Unit at the University of East Anglia in the UK, the global average temperature did not increase between 1998-2005.

“...this eight-year period of temperature stasis did coincide with society's continued power station and SUV-inspired pumping of yet more carbon dioxide into the atmosphere,” noted paleoclimate researcher and geologist Bob Carter of James Cook University in Australia in an April 2006 article titled, “There is a problem with global warming... it stopped in 1998.” See: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/opinion/main.jhtml?xml=/opinion/2006/04/09/do0907.xml&sheet=/news/2006/04/09/ixworld.html>

Claim: Herbert wrote: “But with polar bears drowning because they can't swim far enough to make it from one ice floe to another...”

Fact: Polar Bears are not going extinct because of the supposedly melting ice, according to a biologist Dr. Mitchell Taylor from the arctic government of Nunavut. “Of the 13 populations of polar bears in Canada, 11 are stable or increasing in number. They are not going extinct, or even appear to be affected at present,” Taylor wrote on May 1, 2006. See here:

http://www.thestar.com/NASApp/cs/ContentServer?pagename=thestar/Layout/Article_Type1&c=Article&cid=1146433819696&call_pageid=970599119419

Claim: Herbert wrote: “...with the once-glorious snows of Kilimanjaro about to bring down the final curtain on their long, long run...”

Fact: A *New York Times* recent article debunked Herbert's claims, noting that there is ‘dubious evidence’ that Kilimanjaro is melting due to global warming. “The ice on Kilimanjaro has been in retreat since at least the 1880's, with the greatest decline occurring at the beginning of that period, when greenhouse gas concentrations were much lower,” says the *New York Times* article of July 4, 2006 by Philip M. Boffey. “The National Academies panel judged that Kilimanjaro's glaciers “may be shrinking primarily as a continuing response to precipitation changes earlier in the century,” Boffey noted.

Claim: Herbert wrote: “...with the virtual disappearance of Lake Chad in Africa, which was once the size of Lake Erie, it may be time to get serious about trying to slow this catastrophic trend.”

Fact: The disappearance of Lake Chad primarily has been caused by human overuse of water, not global warming. “The lake's decline probably has nothing to do with global warming, report the two scientists, who based their findings on computer models and satellite imagery made available by NASA. They attribute the situation instead to human actions related to

climate variation, compounded by the ever increasing demands of an expanding population,” according to the April 26, 2001 National Geographic titled “Shrinking African Lake Offers Lesson on Finite Resources.” See:

http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2001/04/0426_lakechadshrinks.html .

Claim: Herbert wrote: “I think the single most effective thing most ordinary Americans could do to become more informed about global warming — and the steps we need to take to fight it — is to go see Al Gore’s movie, “An Inconvenient Truth,” and read his book of the same title.”

Fact: Gore has been criticized by many scientists for his incorrect and misleading presentation of science in his movie. “A general characteristic of Mr. Gore’s approach is to assiduously ignore the fact that the earth and its climate are dynamic; they are always changing even without any external forcing. To treat all change as something to fear is bad enough; to do so in order to exploit that fear is much worse.” – wrote Richard S. Lindzen, the Alfred P. Sloan Professor of Atmospheric Science at MIT, in an op-ed in the June 26, 2006 Wall Street Journal. For more scientific critique of Gore see here: <http://epw.senate.gov/pressitem.cfm?party=rep&id=257909>

In April, 60 scientists wrote a letter to the Canadian Prime Minister questioning the basis for climate alarmism. The letter noted, “’Climate change is real’ is a meaningless phrase used repeatedly by activists to convince the public that a climate catastrophe is looming and humanity is the cause. Neither of these fears is justified. Global climate changes all the time due to natural causes and the human impact still remains impossible to distinguish from this natural “noise.” See web link:

<http://www.canada.com/nationalpost/financialpost/story.html?id=3711460e-bd5a-475d-a6be-4db87559d605>

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THE HIGH COST OF RGGI’S FUEL SWITCHING

Mark Reeder, director of regulatory economics for the New York State Department, made the claim that the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI)--an agreement by seven Northeastern states to require the power sector to cut carbon dioxide emissions beginning in 2009--should have little impact on the reliability of the power grid in the region. He explained,

“Power plants throughout the Northeast, which would be required to obtain tradable emissions allowances or credits for each ton of carbon dioxide they emit, already have flexibility to reduce emissions in the short term simply by switching their fuel source from coal to cleaner natural gas.”

Fact: The United States already faces a natural gas crisis. Policies like RGGI, aimed at forcing additional fuel switching, will drive prices even higher. Just yesterday the [USA Today](#) reported the cost of natural gas just

hit a six month high this week as demand increased for natural-gas-generated electricity.

In March of 2004, Rhode Island Governor Carcieri addressed the natural gas crisis affecting the Northeast, [testifying](#) before the EPW Committee,

“The high cost of natural gas is taking a toll on our economy across New England and the nation. In today’s competitive world manufacturers cannot raise prices to compensate for rising energy costs... We must develop reasonable policies on both state and federal levels that allow natural gas to be produced and delivered to homes and businesses across the country. The alternative is a Northeast without sufficient energy supplies and stable prices — a Northeast that cannot keep the heat on in thousands of homes, cannot provide for the industrial capacity of manufacturing businesses, and cannot remain competitive at home or abroad.”

This past February, Jack Gerard, head of the American Chemistry Council, [testified](#) before the EPW Committee addressing the effect of already high natural gas prices saying,

“The high price of natural gas is driving the global chemical industry out of the US. For example, today there are more than 120 world-scale chemical plants -- plants costing more than \$1 billion -- under development around the world. Only one is being built in the United States. Business Week calls it the “hollowing out of the nation’s industrial core.” By contrast, fifty of those new plants are being built in China...In a few short years, the US chemical industry has lost more than \$50 billion in business to overseas operations and more than 100,000 good-paying jobs in our industry have disappeared. Put another way, the chemical industry went from posting the highest trade surplus in the nation’s history in the late 1990s to becoming a net importer by 2002.”

Despite the claims of proponents of RGGI and other carbon cap initiatives, fuel switching to natural gas is irresponsible and hurts both American workers and consumers.

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IN CASE YOU MISSED IT...

BBC NEWS

MEDIA ATTACKED FOR 'CLIMATE PORN'

By Richard Black
Environment correspondent, BBC News website
August 2, 2006

Apocalyptic visions of climate change used by newspapers, environmental groups and the UK government amount to "climate porn", a think-tank says.

The report from the Labour-leaning Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR) says over-use of alarming images is a "counsel of despair".

It says they make people feel helpless and says the use of cataclysmic imagery is partly commercially motivated.

However, newspapers have defended their coverage of a "crucial issue".

Nobody knows'

The IPPR report also criticises the reporting of individual climate-friendly acts as "mundane, domestic and un compelling".

"The climate change discourse in the UK today looks confusing, contradictory and chaotic," says the report, entitled Warm Words.

"It seems likely that the overarching message for the lay public is that in fact, nobody really knows."

Alarm and rhetoric

IPPR's head of climate change Simon Retallack, who commissioned the report from communication specialists Gill Ereaut and Nat Segnit, said: "We were conscious of the fact that the amount of climate change coverage has increased significantly over the last few years, but there had been no analysis of what the coverage amounted to and what impact it might be having."

They analysed 600 newspaper and magazine articles, as well as broadcast news and adverts.

Coverage breaks down, they concluded, into several distinct areas, including:

- Alarmism, characterised by images and words of catastrophe
- Settlerdom, in which "common sense" is used to argue against the scientific consensus
- Rhetorical scepticism, which argues the science is bad and the dangers hyped
- Techno-optimism, the argument that technology can solve the problem
- Publications said often to take a "sceptical" line included the Daily Mail and Sunday Telegraph.

Into the "alarmist" camp the authors put articles published in newspapers such as the Independent, Financial Times and Sunday Times, as well as statements from environmental groups, academics including James Lovelock and Lord May, and some government programmes.

"It is appropriate to call [what some of these groups publish] 'climate porn', because on some level it is like a disaster movie," Mr Retallack told the BBC

News website.

"The public become disempowered because it's too big for them; and when it sounds like science fiction, there is an element of the unreal there."

'Horror film'

No British newspaper has taken climate change to its core agenda quite like the Independent, which regularly publishes graphic-laden front pages threatening global meltdown, with articles inside continuing the theme.

A recent leader, commenting on the heatwave then affecting Britain, said: "Climate change is an 18-rated horror film. This is its PG-rated trailer.

"The awesome truth is that we are the last generation to enjoy the kind of climate that allowed civilisation to germinate, grow and flourish since the start of settled agriculture 11,000 years ago."

Ian Birrell, the newspaper's deputy editor, said climate change was serious enough to merit this kind of linguistic treatment.

"The Independent led the way on campaigning on climate change and global warming because clearly it's a crucial issue facing the world," he said.

"You can see the success of our campaign in the way that the issue has risen up the political agenda."

Mr Retallack, however, believes some newspapers take an alarmist line on climate change through commercial motives rather than ideology.

"Every newspaper is a commercial organisation," he said, "and when you have a terrifying image on the front of the paper, you are likely to sell more copies than when you write about solutions."

Mr Birrell denied the charge. "You put on your front page what you deem important and what you think is important to your readers," he said.

"If our readers thought we put climate change on our front pages for the same reason that porn mags put naked women on their front pages, they would stop reading us.

"And I disagree that there's an implicit 'counsel of despair', because while we're campaigning on big issues such as ice caps, we also do a large amount on how people can change their own lives, through cycling, installing energy-efficient lighting, recycling, food miles; we've been equally committed on these issues."

Small is not beautiful

The IPPR report acknowledges that the media, government and NGOs do discuss individual actions which can impact greenhouse gas emissions, such as installing low-energy lightbulbs.

But, it says, there is a mismatch of scale; a conclusion with which Solitaire Townsend, MD of the sustainable development communications consultancy Futerra, agrees.

"The style of climate change discourse is that we maximise the problem and minimise the solution," she said.

"So we use a loud rumbling voice to talk about the challenge, about melting ice and drought; yet we have a mouse-like voice when we talk about 'easy, cheap and simple' solutions, making them sound as tiny as possible because we think that's what makes them acceptable to the public.

"In fact it makes them seem trivial in relation to the problem."

Mr Retallack believes his report contains important lessons for the government as it attempts to engage the British public with climate change.

"The government has just put £12m into climate change communication initiatives," he said, "including teams which will work at the local level.

"It's vital that this motivates and engages the public."

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Congress Daily

Mixed Brew Of Objections Imperils Chemical Security Bill

By Chris Strohm
August 1, 2006 (PM Edition)

With the fall elections fast approaching and legislative days running out, Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Chairwoman Collins faces a two-front battle over a comprehensive chemical security bill, jeopardizing prospects that legislation will be passed this year. Her committee unanimously approved a bill in June that would give the Homeland Security Department the authority, for the first time, to regulate and establish security standards for facilities that produce, use or store chemical substances, and penalize facilities that do not comply. Since then, Senate Environment and Public Works Chairman Inhofe has placed a hold on the bill, and a bipartisan group of 14 other senators sent Collins a letter stating several concerns they want resolved before floor debate.

Inhofe objects to the bill because it would allow the Homeland Security Department to regulate drinking water and wastewater facilities that use chemicals, an Inhofe aide said. Inhofe also believes regulating drinking water and wastewater facilities is under the jurisdiction of his committee, said the aide, who noted that Inhofe's committee passed a bill in May that would establish security regulations for wastewater treatment plants. The aide said the Inhofe and Collins staffs are in discussions to try and resolve their differences, but have not reached any agreements. Collins, in a statement to CongressDaily,

pleaded for a resolution. "Given the urgent need for legislation to strengthen the security of the nation's chemical plants, it is disappointing that Sen. Inhofe is holding up a bill that was approved unanimously by the Homeland Security Committee," Collins said. "I hope that the senator will agree to a time agreement that would allow him to offer amendments to address whatever concerns he has, rather than continuing to block consideration of the bill."

The 14 senators who wrote Collins July 13 wanted several issues resolved before the Senate took up the bill. Among the signers were Senate Armed Services Chairman Warner and Sens. George Voinovich, R-Ohio, and Mark Pryor, D-Ark. -- all members of her committee. They called for provisions that would pre-empt states from passing stronger chemical security regulations than federal law; ensure protection of sensitive information; not disrupt the Coast Guard's regulatory regime of chemical facilities at seaports; and bar Homeland Security officials from mandating "inherently safer technology" at facilities, which may include alternative chemicals and manufacturing processes.

"The bill reported out of committee could make communities more vulnerable by allowing the release of sensitive security information to potential terrorists; disrupting ongoing security operations; and creating an unnecessary, redundant, complex and confusing patchwork of local, state and federal security regulations that would provide for inconsistent levels of security across the country," the senators wrote. They argued that the subject of inherently safer technology is "a safety and environmental issue to be addressed before the Environment and Public Works Committee." Inhofe did not sign the letter, but his aide said the chairman agrees the issues raised in it "must be resolved before the bill should be considered on the Senate floor."

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WASHINGTON TIMES

FEAR FACTOR

Washington Times Editorial
August 1, 2006

Climatologist James Hansen's article "The Threat to the Planet" is featured on the front page of the July 13 New York Review of Books, which carries the label "Fiction Issue." How appropriate. In his review of three alarmist books on global warming and of Al Gore's documentary "An Inconvenient Truth," Mr. Hansen stresses all kinds of catastrophic consequences of higher temperatures. Echoing the horror movie "The Day After Tomorrow," He has sea level rising 20 feet by 2100, inundating most of Florida and a good many East Coast cities. By contrast, the U.N. panel of climate scientists, often claimed to represent a "consensus," manages only a bout one-foot rise by 2100. Question: Is Mr. Hansen "out of the mainstream," a closet "skeptical," or even -- to use Gorespeak -- a "denier" of the consensus?

Mr. Hansen, you recall, is the NASA scientist who complained -- most recently on CBS "60 Minutes" -- of being "gagged," "muzzled" and otherwise put upon

by the Bush administration. He also accepted a quarter-million dollars from the Heinz Foundation of Teresa Heinz Kerry and campaigned for John Kerry and against George Bush in Iowa. No connection between these two events, of course. After all, it's ketchup money, not oil money.

The main problems with Mr. Hansen, and others like him, are not the wild claims of coming disasters. No one in his right mind pays attention to these anyway. No, it is the fact that nowhere does he demonstrate that the current, rather modest warming trend is human-caused. He just assumes it: Temperatures are rising, and so is carbon dioxide in the atmosphere. Sorry, that's not good enough. Not when he calls for far-reaching policies that would throttle energy use and the national economy.

Climate models are not evidence and correlations are not proof. The climate of the 20th century warmed sharply before 1940 when CO2 levels were low, and cooled until 1975 while CO2 rose rapidly. Clearly, natural climate fluctuations dominated. So how important is the human contribution to warming since 1975? There is no consensus: Scientific opinions vary from 0 percent up to 100 percent, with most somewhere in between. Tellingly, however, the patterns of warming do not agree with what is expected from the greenhouse effect of CO2.

There is a similar lack of consensus among economists. Some think that warming would be beneficial; others take the opposite view. But here we have relevant historical data. The planet (or at least the northern hemisphere) was much warmer in medieval times than today: Viking settlements in Greenland; no climate calamities; no inundations. The ice sheets survived the warming, and so did the polar bears.

The "Little Ice Age," which followed the Medieval Warm Period and lasted till about 1850, was a real calamity, however: harvests failed, people starved, disease was rampant. So if cooling is bad, and if warming were also bad, why would our present climate just happen to be the best?

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Marc Morano, Communications Director
Matthew Dempsey, Press Secretary



