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Environmental Action · Environmental & Energy Study Institute ·  
Friends of the Earth · Greenpeace · League of Conservation Voters ·  
National Audubon Society · National Environmental Trust ·  
National Wildlife Federation · Natural Resources Defense Council ·  
Physicians for Social Responsibility · Sierra Club ·  
Union of Concerned Scientists · U.S. Public Interest Research Group**

January 18, 2007

Dear Representative:

On behalf of our millions of members and activists, we strongly urge you to be an original cosponsor of the Safe Climate Act. The bill, first introduced last June by Representative Henry Waxman, is a long-term, science-based solution to global warming that will help protect future generations from the worst effects of global warming.

The early signs of global warming are already apparent across the globe. As temperatures reach record levels, droughts are increasing, heat waves are becoming more frequent and intense, and glaciers, snowpack, and ice cover are shrinking worldwide. At the same time, sea levels are rising, hurricane strength is increasing, and diseases are spreading to new areas. The World Health Organization estimates that global warming already cuts short the lives of 150,000 people each year.

All of these impacts have occurred with just a 1.4° F (0.8° C) rise in temperatures since pre-industrial times. Leading scientists, including James Hansen, director of NASA's Goddard Institute for Space Studies, warn that to avoid the worst effects of global warming, we must prevent global average temperatures from rising by approximately an additional 2° F. If we fail to sufficiently reduce our emissions of the pollutants that cause global warming, we could see extreme effects, including the eventual complete melting of the Greenland ice sheet, raising sea levels more than 20 feet and submerging many of the world's population centers.

In 1992, the U.S. and most of the world's nations agreed to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, which has the objective of stabilizing atmospheric greenhouse gas concentrations at a level that would prevent "dangerous anthropogenic interference" with the climate system. The Safe Climate Act seeks to achieve this objective and help prevent global temperatures from crossing the tipping point.

To help achieve that goal, the bill reduces U.S. emissions of global warming pollution to 1990 levels by 2020 (a 15% reduction from today's levels) and to 80% below 1990 levels by 2050.

Initially, the bill reduces U.S. emissions gradually by freezing emissions at 2009 levels in 2010, then reducing emissions by roughly 2% per year from 2011 to 2020. These cuts can be achieved using existing technologies, such as hybrid vehicles, wind, and solar power. After 2020, the bill cuts emissions by roughly 5% each year, as more advanced technologies, such as zero-energy buildings and biofuels from waste materials, become widely available. By 2050, emissions will be 80% lower than in 1990.

To help achieve these reductions, the bill requires gains in energy efficiency, increased use of renewable energy, and cleaner cars. The bill also provides flexibility to help companies meet the pollution-reduction goals through a “cap-and-trade” program.

In addition to protecting future generations from the worst effects of global warming, these policies also will help to reduce U.S. dependence on oil, improve air quality, protect pristine places from oil drilling, and have other far-reaching benefits.

Global warming is the most important environmental challenge of our time, and future generations will judge us by how we handle this challenge. We strongly urge you to be an original cosponsor of this critical bill.

Sincerely,

Margie Alt  
Executive Director  
U.S. Public Interest Research Group (PIRG)

John Flicker  
President  
National Audubon Society

Gene Karpinski  
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