

**Climate Science Watch
1612 K Street, NW, Suite 1100
Washington, DC 20006**

September 4, 2009

The Honorable Barbara Boxer
Chairman, Committee on Environment and Public Works
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Boxer:

We are writing to offer our recommendations for the components of the Senate climate and clean energy legislation that deal with the interrelated issues of national preparedness strategy for adaptation to climate change impacts, a prospective National Climate Service, and the U.S. Global Change Research Program.

Climate Science Watch is a nonprofit public interest education and advocacy project dedicated to holding public officials accountable for the integrity and effectiveness with which they use climate science and related research in government policymaking, toward the goal of enabling society to respond effectively to the challenges posed by global climate disruption. Our senior professional team has a combined experience of more than 40 years working on environmental and clean energy policy issues, in both the executive and legislative branches of federal and state government and with private sector and public interest organizations. Our principal long-term focus has been on the relationship between science and policymaking on the climate change problem.¹

We believe it is essential that legislation include strong provisions on climate change preparedness and a revitalized climate research and impacts assessment program. Just as we must reduce greenhouse emissions, we must prepare for the consequences of global climate disruption. As indicated by the new U.S. Government report, *Global Climate Change Impacts in the United States*, climate change impacts already are underway and will become more damaging in the future.

Just as there are strong economic arguments in favor of shifting toward clean energy and green jobs, there are compelling arguments in favor of preparing for the impacts of climate change. A national climate change adaptation strategy should be included in the legislation, and provisions that will help every region of the country should be highlighted in generating public support for it.

The American Clean Energy and Security Act (H.R. 2454) passed by the House in June 2009 contains a subtitle on Adapting to Climate Change (Title IV, Subtitle E). We have reviewed this Subtitle, as well as S. 2307, the Global Change Research Improvement Act of 2007, and

¹ Prior to founding Climate Science Watch in 2005, CSW Director Rick Piltz served for 10 years in senior positions in the coordination office of the U.S. Global Change Research Program/Climate Change Science Program. Prior to that he was a professional staff member of the House Committee on Science, Space, and Technology, supporting the Committee's oversight of climate change research and clean energy issues. He testified before the Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee on February 7, 2007, at a hearing on Climate Change Research and Scientific Integrity.

S. 2355, the Climate Change Adaptation Act, which were reported by the Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee in 2008.

Based on our review of this legislation, our long experience with and analysis of the U.S. Global Change Research Program (USGCRP), our review of proposals to establish a National Climate Service, and the findings to date of our ongoing National Climate Change Preparedness Initiative, Climate Science Watch respectfully offers the attached recommendations for your consideration.

Some of our key recommendations include the following, with additional recommendations and explanation in the attached document:

National Climate Change Adaptation Planning and Preparedness

- The Senate climate and clean energy bill should require the development and implementation of a comprehensive, proactive national planning and preparedness strategy for limiting and adapting to the socioeconomic and environmental impacts of climate change.
- The Senate should include a program under which the federal government provides support for state-level climate change adaptation planning and implementation.
- The Senate should establish a national climate change preparedness center to integrate federal interagency adaptation planning and implementation. This center should serve as a one-stop point of entry for states and local communities nationwide to access federal expertise and support for operational adaptation activities.

National Climate Service

- We support the provision in H.R. 2454, the American Clean Energy and Security Act passed by the House in June 2009, for a 2-year interagency planning process, led by the Office of Science and Technology Policy, to develop a proposal for the structure and functions of a National Climate Service.
- If a National Climate Service is created, it should be designed as a partner of the USGCRP and serve the purpose of meeting a wide range of time-sensitive stakeholder needs for data, information, and targeted assessments. The U.S. Global Change Research Program (USGCRP) is the appropriate federal program for planning and implementing climate observing systems, climate science research, climate predictive modeling, and national climate change impacts assessments.

U.S. Global Change Research Program (USGCRP)

- The Senate should require federal agencies with scientific research programs to adopt policies that ensure the integrity of scientific communications. Such policies should include provisions regarding the approval of final text and communications, and enable scientists to disseminate research results and freely communicate with the Congress, the media, and colleagues in a timely fashion. Scientific reports and communications of the USGCRP and its participating agencies should be protected from inappropriate political interference.

- The USGCRP needs White House leadership. The Senate bill should designate the Office of Science and Technology Policy as the chair of the USGCRP interagency principals-level committee.
- We believe OSTP should be given a mandate to play a stronger role in governing and shaping agency research and budget priorities for climate and global change research than it has been able to in the past.
- With the benefit of 20 years of experience since the development of the original Global Change Research Act and 10 years since the first National Assessment of Climate Change Impacts was carried out, the Senate should update and strengthen the requirements for climate change impacts assessments.
- The Senate should strengthen USGCRP budget coordination and reporting requirements to promote accountability for how the priorities established in the USGCRP strategic plan for research and assessments are being reflected in the programs and budget requests of the program's participating agencies.
- A full-time program leadership group reporting to the OSTP Director should be located in the USGCRP Coordination Office. This office should have senior-level leadership with a stronger mandate to drive interagency program priorities and coordination than does the current USGCRP Office.
- The Senate should consider requiring the establishment of an external committee of program stakeholders to provide ongoing oversight, with periodic reporting to the White House and Congress from a stakeholder perspective on USGCRP research and assessment priorities and program implementation.
- We support including the proposal presented by the Union of Concerned Scientists, most of which is included in H.R. 2454, pp. 684-699, to require periodic scientific reviews of the adequacy of greenhouse gas emissions reductions policy and actions to meet targeted goals in reducing the risk of climate change impacts.

We would be pleased to meet with you and your staff to discuss these recommendations. I can be reached by e-mail at climatewatch@comcast.net, and by phone at 301-807-2472 (direct line).

Sincerely,



Rick Piltz
Director, Climate Science Watch

cc:

The Honorable James M. Inhofe, Ranking Member, Committee on Environment and Public Works