



Earth Day 2002

The Western Caucus

Richard W. Pombo, Chairman

Myths & Facts

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Global Warming

Myth: The science on global warming is sound. CNN reported that a National Academy of Sciences report in 2001 represented "a unanimous decision that global warming is real, is getting worse and is due to man. There is no wiggle room."

Fact: This is false. Richard Lindzen, Ph.D., professor at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, one of the 11 scientists who prepared the report, has said so, repeatedly. He has said there were a wide variety of scientific views presented in the report and "that the full report did, [express a wide variety of views] making clear that there is no consensus, unanimous or otherwise, about long-term climate trends and what causes them."¹ The same is true of the all of the U.N.'s International Panel on Climate Change studies on which the notion of global warming is based.

Claims that scientific opinion is nearly unanimous on the subject of global warming are wrong. The Oregon Institute of Science and Medicine received signatures from over 17,100 basic and applied American scientists, two-thirds with advanced degrees, to a document saying, "There is no convincing scientific evidence that human release of carbon dioxide, methane, or other greenhouse gasses is causing or will, in the foreseeable future, cause catastrophic heating of the Earth's atmosphere and disruption of the Earth's climate."²

Myth: We have already seen global warming in this century that is the result of man-made emissions.

Fact: There is no evidence of man-made global warming. The computer models used in U.N. studies say the first area to heat under the "greenhouse gas effect" should be the lower atmosphere - known as the troposphere.³ Highly accurate, carefully checked satellite data have shown absolutely no such tropospheric warming. There has been surface warming of about half a degree Celsius, but this is far below the customary natural swings in surface temperatures.⁴

Myth: Carbon dioxide emissions from burning fossil fuels are the primary cause of global warming, and the Earth's temperature can be expected to rise between 2.5 and 10.4 degrees Fahrenheit in this century.

Fact: There are many indications that carbon dioxide does not play a significant role in global warming. Dr. Lindzen estimates that a doubling of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere would produce a temperature increase of only one degree Celsius.⁵ In fact, clouds and water vapor appear to be far more important factors related to global temperature. According to Dr. Lindzen and NASA scientists, clouds and water vapor may play a significant role in regulating the Earth's temperature to keep it more constant.⁶

Myth: Even if the science on global warming isn't certain, we should abide by the requirements of the Kyoto Protocol (an international global warming treaty) as a precaution that man-made global warming might be real.

Fact: According to projections by the U.S. Energy Information Administration (EIA), the Kyoto Protocol would have a devastating affect on the U.S. economy. If Kyoto had been ratified by the U.S., the EIA estimates gasoline prices would rise 14 to 66 cents per gallon by the year 2010, electricity prices would go up 20 to 86 percent⁷ and compliance with the treaty would cost the United States economy \$400 billion per year.⁸

We should not take actions that may not be necessary but will certainly increase the level of poverty in this country. As economist Walter Williams of George Mason University has observed, "As you look around the world, it is poverty, as opposed to dirty air, that has implications for health."⁹

Myth: The burdens of meeting the demands of the Kyoto Protocol are distributed fairly.

Fact: The burdens of meeting the demands of the Kyoto Protocol would fall most heavily on minorities. A study commissioned by six African-American and Hispanic organizations found that the increased costs forced by the treaty would cut minority income in the United States by 10 percent (in contrast, white incomes would go down only 4.5 percent) and 864,000 black Americans and 511,000 Hispanics would lose their jobs.¹⁰

Undeveloped countries such as China, India and Brazil are exempted from the Kyoto Protocol. However, these three countries alone are projected to produce 16 percent more carbon dioxide by the year 2020 than the U.S., even if the protocol is not in place.¹¹

Energy

Myth: To reduce American reliance upon foreign oil, we need to conserve resources by increasing the Corporate Average Fuel Economy (CAFE) standards on automobile manufacturers.

Fact: Increasing CAFE standards not only restricts consumer choice, but it also leads to unnecessary traffic deaths. The National Academy of Sciences (NAS) predicts new standards would raise sticker costs between \$500 and \$2,500 per vehicle.¹ More important, the NAS also estimates that 2,000 additional deaths per year can already be attributed to the downsizing of automobiles forced on by CAFE standards.² That's almost 50,000 deaths to date - nearly the number of lives lost in Vietnam. Moving to smaller, lighter vehicles in the 1970s and early 1980s, the NAS concluded, resulted in "an additional 13,000 to 26,000 incapacitating injuries and 97,000 to 195,000 total injuries in 1993" alone.³

Myth: Drilling for oil in the Artic National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR) is dangerous to the environment and would only provide the United States with six months of oil.

Fact: During the Clinton Administration, the Department of Energy released the publication "Environmental Benefits of Advanced Oil and Gas Exploration and Production Technology" in October 1999. The report touted the fact that oil and gas drilling can be done in a very environmentally-sensitive manner. It also reported that oil and gas drilling could sometimes aid the environment.⁴ The claim that ANWR only holds six months of oil is misleading at best. That statistic requires an assumption that the United States would rely solely on oil from ANWR and exclude all other sources of oil, foreign and domestic, during that entire six- month period.⁵ The U.S. Energy Information Administration (EIA) estimates that ANWR holds between 5.7-16 billion barrels of oil. This is enough to replace half of what we currently import from the entire Persian Gulf region for 36 years, or could replace what we now import from Saudi Arabia for almost 30 years.⁶

Urban Sprawl/Smart Growth

Myth: "Smart growth" urban planning policies are reasonable land-use measures that combat the ills of urban sprawl without harming Americans' standard of living.

Fact: Smart growth measures such as urban growth boundaries and restrictive zoning practices inflate housing prices and could deprive millions of Americans of homeownership. Minorities and moderate-income families especially suffer from smart growth policies because many potential new homeowners are minorities and the restriction on new housing drives up prices and reduces the supply of available housing. Between 1994 and 1998, minorities accounted for 42 percent of the growth in homeownership, but smart growth policies threaten to end this positive social trend. The smart growth program in Portland, Oregon - widely praised by environmentalists as a model for anti-sprawl planning has contributed to a major escalation in the cost of housing in that city. In 1991, Portland was ranked as the 55th most affordable city in America. Due to the rapid rise in housing prices, primarily caused by the urban growth boundary and other anti-sprawl policies, Portland is now ranked 174th in housing affordability - the second least-affordable city in the nation. Between 1995 and 1997 alone, more than 80,000 single-family homes became unaffordable due to housing price inflation. In one inner-city Portland neighborhood, home prices doubled between 1990 and 1995 from \$41,300 to \$83,800, seriously undercutting the ability of moderate- and low-income families to own homes.¹

Myth: "Smart-growth" policies do not adversely affect minorities.

Fact: A recent study done by Matthew E. Kahn of Tufts University found that anti-sprawl legislation, however well intended, made housing less affordable in the inner cities dominated primarily by minorities. The study also found that in "sprawled metropolitan areas," African Americans live in larger homes and more black families are likely to own their own homes than in areas where sprawl is not allowed.²

Myth: Limiting development of housing in suburban areas is a good way to reduce the fiscal burden on local governments.

Fact: So-called "smart-growth" policies are aimed at reducing development in the suburbs. However, these policies make housing less affordable and restrict housing options for working families. In the 1990s, the number of jobs in the northern Virginia region increased by 412,000, but the number of dwellings grew by just 204,000. Using the standard of 1.6 workers per home, that is a shortage of approximately 53,500 homes.³ This housing shortage actually increases the fiscal burden on local governments because it forces many low-income families to rely on public housing assistance.

Air and Water Quality

Myth: Air quality today is worse than it was at the time of the first Earth Day in 1970. The six major pollutants (sulfur dioxide, nitrogen oxide, ozone, carbon monoxide, lead and particulates like soot and smoke) are more prevalent in our air today than they were 32 years ago.

Fact: Air quality today is much better than it was in the 1970s. Aggregate emissions of the six "criteria" pollutants regulated under the Clean Air Act have fallen by 64 percent since 1970.¹ Between 1976 and 1998, sulfur dioxide levels decreased by 64.7 percent, nitrogen oxide levels decreased by 37.9 percent, ozone decreased by 27.6 percent, carbon monoxide decreased by 67.2 percent, particulates decreased by 26.4 percent and lead decreased by a whopping 97.3 percent.² Gloom and doom environmentalists seem to want the public to believe that our air today is less healthy, but quite the opposite is true.

Myth: Air Quality Index (AQI) levels, which measure the amount of pollutants in the air, are rising toward dangerous levels in major cities across the nation, exposing people to more days of poor air quality. (The AQI is an index for reporting air quality regarding all of the major air pollutants listed above with the exception of lead)

Fact: AQI rates are significantly lower today than in the past, and extreme progress was made during the last decade. In 1990, Los Angeles had 173 days in which the AQI was listed as unhealthy. In 2000, there were only 18 unhealthy AQI days. In New York, the number of days of unhealthy AQI ratings dropped from 36 to one between 1990 and 2000. The number of unhealthy days in Las Vegas fell from 21 to zero, while San Diego reduced the number of unhealthy days from 93 to three. Washington D.C. had 25 unhealthy days in 1990 yet there were only two reported in 2000. Atlanta also reduced the number of unhealthy days, going from 42 in 1990 to only eight in 2000.³

Myth: Texas has the worst air quality in the nation.

Fact: Environmentalists repeated this myth over and over during the 2000 presidential campaign. This myth was based on a selective view of information used for supporting the claim. Over the last five years, air quality in Texas improved for five of the six criteria pollutants. Environmentalists' claims are based solely on ozone measurements, the only AQI level that has not been reduced. To judge air quality, one should look at all measured pollutants. All Texas cities comply with the Clean Air Act standards for four of the six criteria pollutants. By comparison, far more people are exposed to unhealthy air quality in California than are in Texas.⁴

Myth: The increase in the number of cases of asthma over the last 20 years is caused by air pollution.

Fact: Over the last 30 years, air quality has improved at the same time as incidences of asthma increased. This casts doubt on the correlation between air quality and asthma. Scientists have found asthma, to a large extent, is related to genetics. Although air pollution can make conditions worse for asthma sufferers, it does not cause the condition.⁵

Myth: There is a hole in the ozone layer that continues to grow, thus vastly increasing the danger of people contracting skin cancer.

Fact: According to the United Nations, the ozone layer is expected to slowly recover over the next 50 years as a result of the elimination of ozone-depleting chemicals like chlorofluorocarbons.⁶ In addition, the thinning of the ozone layer is not the primary cause of skin cancer. Factors such as increased lifespans, increased sunbathing and the introduction of better medical screening techniques that detect more of these types of cancer are more likely causes for an increase in reported skin cancer cases.⁷

Myth: We are running out of water.

Fact: The amount of water in our ecosystem will always be the same. Water is constantly recycled through evaporation and precipitation. According to Michael Sanera and Jane Shaw in their book, *Facts not Fear: A Parents Guide to Teaching Children about the Environment*, the Earth "has more than enough water to meet human demands... [the problem is that] water is often found in the wrong place at the wrong time."⁸

Biodiversity and Endangered Species

Myth: Species are going extinct at an alarming rate. It has been estimated that 40,000 species become extinct every year or approximately 110 per day.

Fact: The original estimate, made in 1979 by Norman Myers in his book *The Sinking Ark*,¹ was based on the assumption that 1 million species would become extinct in 25 years. This works out to 40,000 extinct species per year.² The fact is we do not even know the exact number of species that exist on earth - estimates suggest there are between 1.6 million and 80 million species - let alone the number that have or will become extinct.³

Myth: We will lose one-half of all species on Earth within a generation.

Fact: In their book, *Facts not Fear: A Parent's Guide to Teaching Children about the Environment*, Michael Sanera and Jane Shaw say, "The truth is we don't know how many species are disappearing. We don't even know the number of species that exist."⁴

Myth: The Endangered Species Act (ESA) has been successful in saving numerous at-risk flora and fauna.

Fact: Of 1,254 animal and plant species listed as endangered since the ESA was enacted in 1973, only 29 have been removed from the list.⁵ Only 13 listed species have actually been recovered, however, since twelve were taken off the list due to either erroneous population counts or data entry errors. Only seven listed species have become extinct.⁶ This amounts to a one percent recovery rate over almost 30 years.

Myth: Saving old growth forests for the spotted owl helps other birds and animals.

Fact: Not so. Indeed, not allowing clear cutting or thinning of forests because of one species can be detrimental to others. For instance, by restricting logging of old growth forests to protect the habitat of the spotted owl, other birds such as the golden winged warbler, ruffed grouse and Eastern towhee are deprived of the new young forest growth they need to survive.⁷

Myth: The Endangered Species Act is applied equally in all regions of the United States.

Fact: The National Wilderness Institute (NWI) in Alexandria, VA has filed a lawsuit against the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers claiming selective enforcement of ESA protections has endangered the shortnose sturgeon. The Corps allows the flushing of millions of pounds of sediments laced with chemicals from the Washington, D.C. aqueduct several times a year, often under the cover of night or inclement weather, through the C&O Canal National Historic Park and into the Potomac, an American Heritage River.

One EPA official from the Water Protection Division called the Corps action "the most toxic discharge that I have seen." He concluded that a single, enormous discharge that includes several million pounds of solids might contain the equivalent of a significant percentage of the total annual discharge of pollutants by the city's sewer treatment facilities. A National Marine Fisheries Service official put it simply: the discharges are "toxic" and "we don't want it in the water." Much of the toxic dumping occurs in crucial sturgeon spawning grounds, including what government biological experts consider the "primary if not only spawning habitat" in the Potomac River for the endangered shortnose sturgeon.⁸

Footnotes

Section 1: Global Warming

1 Richard Lindzen, professor of meteorology, Massachusetts Institute of Technology and member of the National Academy of Sciences, "Scientists' Report Doesn't Support The Kyoto Treaty," The Wall Street Journal, June 11, 2001.

2 The Oregon Institute of Science and Medicine, "Petition Project," available on the Internet at <http://www.oism.org/pproject/s33p357.htm>.

3 James K. Glassman and Sallie Baliunas, The Weekly Standard, June 25, 2001.

4 *Ibid.*

5 Richard Lindzen, professor of meteorology, Massachusetts Institute of Technology and member of the National Academy of Sciences, "Scientists' Report Doesn't Support The Kyoto Treaty," The Wall Street Journal, June 11, 2001.

6 James K. Glassman and Sallie Baliunas, The Weekly Standard, June 25, 2001.

7 Jay E. Hakes, Administrator, Energy Information Administration, Testimony before the Committee on Science, U.S. House of Representatives, October 9, 1998.

8 John Carlisle, "President Bush must kill the Kyoto Global Warming Treaty and Oppose Efforts to Regulate Carbon Dioxide," National Policy Analysis #328, The National Center for Public Policy Research, February 2001, available on the Internet at <http://www.nationalcenter.org/NPA328.html>.

9 Interview with Walter Williams, Ph.D. published in Environment and Climate News, The Heartland Institute, February 2000.

10 "Study Says Global Warming Treaty Will Hurt U.S. Minorities," Associated Press, July 6, 2000, cited by John Carlisle, "Treaty to Combat Unproven Global Warming Threat Would Hurt Americans' Standard of Living," National Policy Analysis #309, The National Center for Public Policy Research, September 2000, available on the Internet at <http://www.nationalcenter.org/NPA309.html>.

11 Heritage Foundation calculations, based on data from U.S. Department of Energy, Energy Information Agency Administration, International Energy Outlook 2001, Table A10.

Section 2: Energy

- 1 Technology and Economic Analysis in the prepublication version of the report, "Effectiveness and Impact of Corporate Average Fuel Economy Standards, 2002," National Academy of Sciences, Washington, DC, downloaded from <http://books.nap.edu/books/NI000377/html/18.html>.
- 2 "Effectiveness and Impact of Corporate Average Fuel Economy Standards 2002," National Academy of Sciences, Washington, DC, downloaded from http://print.nap.edu/pdf/0309076013/pdf_image/26.pdf.
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- 4 Tom Randall, "Bill Clinton's Department of Energy is on Record: Oil and Gas Exploration is Environmentally-Friendly," Ten Second Response, The National Center for Public Policy Research, February 13, 2002, available on the Internet at <http://www.nationalcenter.org/TSR21302.html>.
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- 6 Tom Randall, "Senate Democrats Fight Energy Bill," Ten Second Response, The National Center for Public Policy Research, October 18, 2001, available on the Internet at <http://www.nationalcenter.org/TSR101801.html>.
- 7 Tom Randall, "Beating Swords into Plowshares - The 21st Century Way," National Policy Analysis #376, The National Center for Public Policy Research, November 2001, available on the Internet at <http://www.nationalcenter.org/NPA376.html>.

Section 3: Sprawl

- 1 John Carlisle, "Suburban Snob Politics Fuels 'Smart Growth' Land-Use Movement," National Policy Analysis #312, The National Center for Public Policy Research, Washington, DC, October 2000, available on the Internet at <http://www.nationalcenter.org/NPA312.html>.
- 2 Matthew E. Kahn, Tufts University, "Does Sprawl Reduce the Black/White Housing Consumption Gap?," Housing Policy Debate, Volume 12, Issue 1, Fannie Mae Foundation 2001, p. 84.
- 3 Peter Whoriskey, "Prosperity Feeds Housing Pinch," The Washington Post, March 17, 2002, downloaded from <http://www.washingtonpost.com/ac2/wp-dyn/A39269-2002Mar16?language=printer> on March 18, 2002.

Section 4: Air and Water Quality

- 1 Steven Hayward and Julie Majeres, "Index of Leading Environmental Indicators 2001, Sixth Edition," Pacific Research Institute, San Francisco, CA, April 2001, p. 8.
- 2 Hayward and Majeres, p. 18.
- 3 Hayward and Majeres, p. 22.
- 4 Hayward and Majeres, p. 21.
- 5 Bjorn Lomborg, *The Skeptical Environmentalist*, Cambridge University Press, 2001, p. 187.
- 6 Lomborg, p. 274.
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- 8 Michael Sanera and Jane Shaw, *Facts not Fear: A Parent's Guide to Teaching Children about the Environment*, Regnery Publishing, Inc., Washington, DC, 1996, p. 189.

Section 5: Biodiversity and Endangered Species

- 1 Bjorn Lomborg, *The Skeptical Environmentalist*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2001, p. 249.
- 2 Lomborg, p. 252.
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- 4 Michael Sanera and Jane S. Shaw, *Facts not Fear: A Parent's Guide to Teaching Children about the Environment*, Regnery Publishing, Inc., Washington, DC, 1996, p.131.
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