

**Testimony of Frances Beinecke
President, Natural Resources Defense Council**

**Before the
Committee on Energy and Commerce
U.S. House of Representatives**

**Hearing On
“The U.S. Climate Action Partnership”
January 15, 2009**

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for your invitation to testify today as a member of the United States Climate Action Partnership, or USCAP. My name is Frances Beinecke. I am the President of the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC). NRDC is a national, nonprofit organization of scientists, lawyers and environmental specialists dedicated to protecting public health and the environment. Founded in 1970, NRDC has more than 1.2 million members and online activists nationwide, served from offices in New York, Washington, Los Angeles and San Francisco, Chicago and Beijing.

The time for action on global warming has already been delayed too long. Every day we learn more about the ways in which global warming is already affecting our planet. Climate scientists warn us that we must act now to begin making serious emission reductions if we are to avoid truly dangerous global warming pollution concentrations. Failure to pursue significant reductions in global warming pollution very soon will make the job much harder in the future—both the job of stabilizing atmospheric pollution concentrations and the job of avoiding the worst impacts of a climate gone haywire.

A growing body of scientific opinion has formed that we face extreme dangers if global average temperatures are allowed to increase by more than 2 degrees Fahrenheit from today's levels. NRDC believes we may be able to stay below this temperature increase if atmospheric concentrations of CO₂ and other global warming gases are kept from exceeding 450 ppm CO₂-equivalent and then rapidly reduced. However, this will require us to halt U.S. emissions growth within the next few years and then achieve significant cuts in emissions in the next decade, progressing to an approximately 80% cut by 2050.

This goal is ambitious, but achievable. But if we delay and emissions continue to grow at or near the business-as-usual trajectory for another decade, the job will become much harder. In short, a slow start means a crash finish, with steeper and more disruptive cuts in emissions required for each year of delay, or if insufficient action is taken, a seriously disrupted climate.

As a leading environmental organization, NRDC's top priority is addressing the global warming crisis immediately. Global warming is the most urgent environmental problem we face today. Stopping it will require an immense effort, spanning the globe, and lasting several decades. Because it is a problem for all mankind, no single institution or nation can expect to solve it on its own, and we will need strong, innovative leadership from all quarters. We believe congressional action will be accelerated if we can find common ground among differing interests on as many controversial issues as possible. We joined USCAP two years ago in recognition of this reality. USCAP demonstrates the ability of very diverse interests to come together to act for the common good to help solve global warming, while recognizing and addressing the complicated set of issues posed by global warming legislation.

USCAP is united in the belief that we can, and must, take prompt action to establish a coordinated, economy-wide, market-driven approach to climate protection. The members of USCAP believe that properly constructed policy can be economically viable, environmentally responsible, and politically achievable. Swift legislative action will encourage innovation and provide needed U.S. leadership on this global challenge. Given that USCAP includes major environmental groups, fossil energy producers and users, and leading members of the manufacturing sector, we believe that we have achieved a remarkable level of consensus regarding global warming legislation and we hope that this level of consensus will be helpful to the Committee and the Congress as it moves forward in crafting legislation.

USCAP launched its landmark report, titled *A Call for Action*¹, in January 2007, which lays out a framework for climate protection legislation. Today it includes 31 businesses and leading environmental organizations.² USCAP recognizes that the United States faces an urgent need to reinvigorate our nation's economy, make the country more energy secure, and take meaningful action to slow, stop and reverse GHG emissions to address climate change. Thoughtful and comprehensive national energy and climate policy will help secure our economic prosperity and provide American businesses and the nation's workforce with the opportunity to innovate and succeed.

We support enactment of an economy-wide, market-driven approach which includes a well-crafted cap-and-trade program that places specified limits on GHG emissions, robust cost-containment measures, complementary policies and measures to supplement the cap-and-trade program, and a fully funded federal technology research, development, demonstration, and deployment program for climate-friendly technologies. Properly designed legislation will encourage innovation, enhance America's energy security,

¹ *A Call for Action* available at: <http://us-cap.org/USCAPCallforAction.pdf>.

² The current members of USCAP are: Alcoa; American International Group, Inc.; Boston Scientific Corporation; BP America, Inc.; Caterpillar Inc.; Chrysler LLC; ConocoPhillips; Deere & Co.; Dow Chemical Company; Duke Energy; DuPont; Environmental Defense Fund; Exelon Corporation; Ford Motor Company; FPL Group; General Electric; General Motors Corporation; Johnson & Johnson; Marsh, Inc.; Natural Resources Defense Council; NRG Energy; PepsiCo North America; Pew Center on Global Climate Change; PG&E Corporation; PNM Resources; Rio Tinto; Shell Oil Company; Siemens Corporation; The Nature Conservancy; World Resources Institute; and Xerox Corporation.

foster economic growth, improve our balance of trade, and provide critically needed U.S. leadership on this vital global challenge.

I will specifically address the issue of targets and timetables in my oral testimony and the need to establish a mandatory emission reduction pathway to achieve the goal of limiting global atmospheric GHG concentrations to a level that minimizes large-scale adverse climate change impacts to human populations and the natural environment.

We recognize the challenge facing this Committee in crafting comprehensive climate change legislation and we very much hope that the Committee will call upon our unique partnership to help sort through these complexities. The need to begin the transformation of our economy to a sustainable, secure, low-carbon future is compelling and timely; indeed, this will only become more difficult, and more costly, if Congress delays action.

Recent debate surrounding the crafting of an economic stimulus package early in the 111th Congress has included discussion of such an energy investment. We agree that such efforts can and should be taken as early as possible. Additionally, a central tenet of our *Call for Action* is that in order to effect the change needed throughout the economy, an economy-wide cap-and-trade system is essential. When combined with complementary measures, the resulting new vision and policy direction will spur the innovation through which America has always excelled. When given the proper tools, incentives and market signals, the American entrepreneurial spirit will lead to sustainability solutions required to meet our many economic, energy, environmental and national security challenges.

USCAP has attempted to help inform congressional deliberations over the past two years. Following our *Call for Action*, we have provided Congress with international principles and more detailed information on the topics of cost containment, energy efficiency, geologic carbon storage technologies and a greenhouse gas registry. Further, our diverse and broad-based coalition has and will continue to serve as a sounding board for policy-makers as they contemplate legislative options.

Over the past six months, USCAP members have worked diligently to refine our policy objectives in order to better advise Congress and the incoming Administration on workable solutions. We have agreed upon a framework for a balanced and integrated approach to key linked issues that must be addressed in any national climate legislation. USCAP is committed to helping Congress find workable, cost-effective approaches to climate change. We believe that path forward exists and that we must embark on the journey with deliberate speed. Representing many sectors of the economy, we believe we are in the unique position to work with the President-elect, Congress and all other stakeholders to enact an environmentally effective, economically sustainable and fair climate change program. We look forward to working with the Committee in the 111th Congress to ensure prompt enactment of national climate protection legislation.