

March 19, 2007

Honorable Chairman Dingell and Chairman Boucher:

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute our views and ideas on the country's climate change policy, a policy that will have enormous impacts to the future of God's Earth and God's people. The National Council of Churches, comprised of 35 member denominations representing 100,000 mainline protestant, orthodox, and historic black church congregations across the United States, serves as both a convener and voice for a faith constituency of 45 million people. Though there are issues we cannot come to consensus on, the issue of global warming and climate change is one that each of our denominations acknowledges as one of the most important moral issues of our time.

Prominent scientists and major, respected scientific bodies are in agreement that the Earth is warming because of human-induced carbon emissions. Global warming threatens the very fabric of God's creation and will hit those who are least able to adapt—both human and nonhuman—the hardest. Because the Christian community is called to justice, to be good “neighbors” with our brothers and sisters across the globe, and to be stewards of God's creation, addressing global warming is a moral imperative and a Christian call.

Scientists around the world agree that an additional increase of two degrees Fahrenheit in the world's temperature would lead to catastrophic changes to God's creation including the extinction of species, an increase in extreme weather events, and rising sea levels. This will have a disproportionate impact on those living in poverty and hunger, the elderly and infants, and those least responsible for the emissions of green house gases.

As a result, the National Council of Churches calls on our elected officials to act quickly to enact effective climate legislation with comprehensive, mandatory, and aggressive reductions in emissions that follow scientific guidelines to reduce carbon emissions to 15-20 percent below 2000 levels by 2020, and to 80 percent below 2000 levels by the year 2050. In addition, legislation must deliver real justice to all of God's creation and avoid placing the burden of carbon reduction unduly on our children's children. Any global warming legislation must include mechanisms that mitigate the impacts of global warming, particularly for vulnerable populations in the U.S. and abroad.

In order to successfully address these issues, we feel that global warming legislation must adhere to the following principles:

**Justice:** Strive for justice and acknowledge that global warming's societal impact already falls, and will continue to fall, most heavily on the people around the world who are least able to mitigate the impacts—poor and vulnerable populations in the U.S. and in developing countries. As a leading industrialized nation that has disproportionately contributed to greenhouse gas emissions, it is incumbent upon us to rectify this injustice.

**Stewardship:** Heed the call to be faithful stewards and caretakers of God's creation by limiting the future impacts of global warming on God's Earth. Already, global warming has damaged the precious balance of God's creation, including increasing the number of threatened species, causing long-term drought, and melting Arctic ice.

**Sustainability:** Ensure that efforts to curb global warming prevent further environmental and societal tragedies. As people of faith we are guided by the value of sustainability. Sustainability requires that we enable biological and social systems that nurture and support life not be depleted or poisoned.

**Sufficiency:** In a world of finite resources, for all to have enough requires that those among us who have more than enough will need to address our patterns of acquisition and consumption. We can not achieve significant reductions in global warming emissions unless we make changes in our lifestyles and particularly in our energy consumption.

Each of these principles has been acknowledged as crucial in the development of effective and meaningful climate legislation. Attached please find the principles in full which include the various elements of each principle which we feel must be a part of our national climate policy.

Thank you again for this opportunity and we look forward to working with you in the future.

Sincerely,

Cassandra Carmichael  
Director, Eco-Justice Program  
National Council of Churches of Christ in the USA

**National Council of Churches of Christ in the USA**  
**Guiding Principles for Global Warming Legislation**  
**February 2007**

**Justice:** Strive for justice and acknowledge that global warming's societal impact already falls, and will continue to fall, most heavily on the people around the world who are least able to mitigate the impacts—poor and vulnerable populations in the U.S. and in developing countries. As a leading industrialized nation that has disproportionately contributed to greenhouse gas emissions, it is incumbent upon us to rectify this injustice. To reach our goal of justice, we require that legislation:

- Include mechanisms that mitigate the impacts of global warming particularly for vulnerable populations in the U.S. and abroad.
- Prevent further harm to human health and all of God's creation by utilizing clean energy sources when addressing global warming and carbon pollution.
- Focus on a fair and equitable distribution of total benefits and costs among people, communities, and nations, and in particular rectify the disproportionate impact that low-income communities have and will experience as the climate continues to change.
- Enable our brothers and sisters now living in poverty to have both economic independence and stability and to eliminate the devastating impacts that global warming has and will continue to have on those people in the U.S. and around the world living in poverty.
- Take action now to avoid placing the burden of carbon reduction unduly on our children's children.
- Endorse policies that place a high priority on allowing all people to live in God's abundance and with dignity by ensuring that basic human needs and worker justice are not adversely impacted by the effects of global warming or future efforts to address global warming.

**Stewardship:** Heed the call to be faithful stewards and caretakers of God's creation by limiting the future impacts of global warming on God's Earth. Already, global warming has damaged the precious balance of God's creation, including increasing the number of threatened species, causing long-term drought, and melting Arctic ice. To reach our goal of stewardship, we require that legislation:

- Follow recognized scientific guidelines and recommendations in order to protect all of God's creation and prevent catastrophic damage to God's Earth and God's people. Following their recommendations, legislation must include comprehensive, mandatory, and aggressive emission reductions that aim to limit the increase in Earth's temperature to 2 degrees Celsius or less. Legislation should focus on the short term goal of reducing U.S. carbon emissions to reach a 15-20 percent reduction in carbon by 2020 with a long term vision to achieve carbon emissions that are 80 percent of 2000 levels by the year 2050.

- Avoid catastrophic global warming, which would devastate God's creation, put more pressure on disaster and relief responses, and endanger the future of the planet. Although global warming impacts are already being felt, we must ensure that God's people and planet are protected from the catastrophic effects that may occur if we fail to significantly curb our carbon emissions.
- Call on major emitters to take responsibility for their actions and work to significantly reduce their carbon emissions.

**Sustainability:** Ensure that efforts to curb global warming prevent further environmental and societal tragedies. As people of faith we are guided by the value of sustainability. Sustainability requires that we enable biological and social systems that nurture and support life not be depleted or poisoned. To reach our goal of sustainability, we require that legislation:

- Maintain God's good creation by preventing policies that place the burden of our lifestyles on one aspect of creation and encouraging policies that sustain and restore vibrant eco-systems with economic justice so that communities of life can flourish for generations to come.
- Respond to global warming in a way that reflects the interdependence of all of God's creation.
- Support energy sources that are renewable, clean, and avoid destruction of God's creation.

**Sufficiency:** In a world of finite resources, for all to have enough requires that those among us who have more than enough will need to address our patterns of acquisition and consumption. We can not achieve significant reductions in global warming emissions unless we make changes in our lifestyles and particularly in our energy consumption. To support the goal of sufficiency, legislation must:

- Encourage energy conservation in our homes, our communities, and our places of worship.
- Encourage energy conservation in national transportation and distribution systems and commercial enterprises.
- Encourage the federal government to lead through research and example in the practice and implementation of energy conservation.