

## OPENING STATEMENT



**Climate Change Strategy and Technology Innovation Act of 2001**  
**Chairman Joe Lieberman**  
**July 18, 2001**

Welcome to the Governmental Affairs Committee. I'd like to thank our witnesses for joining us today to present testimony regarding the Climate Change Strategy and Technology Innovation Act of 2001, introduced by Senators Byrd and Stevens.

In the long-term, there is no greater environmental challenge facing the United States – and the world – than global climate change. Two recent scientific reports, one by the United Nations and a second by the National Academy of Sciences, have confirmed our fears about climate change. These reports concluded that the Earth is warming, that the warming is caused by human activities and that unless we reverse this trend we will face potentially dire consequences, including rising sea levels, widespread drought, the spread of diseases associated with warmer weather, and an increase in extreme weather events.

Most everyone agrees on the problem and the need for a strong response, except some here in the United States. One need only look to Genoa and Bonn, where thousands of protesters are gathering to demonstrate against President Bush's decision to walk away from the Kyoto Protocol to appreciate the depth of conviction associated with global warming and the extent to which the United States has separated itself from the rest of the world on this subject. I feel strongly that we need an international agreement with binding targets and timetables for reducing greenhouse gas emissions. We need it because the call from Rio for voluntary efforts drew little or no response that I know of, though some of my colleagues feel otherwise.

But we are not here to debate those questions today because I believe that our two colleagues, Senators Byrd and Stevens, have put together a legislative proposal that creates common ground we can all occupy and from which we can move forward together. Achieving a bipartisan consensus on this legislation can, I believe, be an important turning point in America's reaction to global climate change.

The legislation Senators Byrd and Stevens propose will create a focused, comprehensive effort within the Executive Branch that will provide the leadership and creative work that the problem of global warming requires. It will establish a new National Office of Climate

Change Response in the White House - comparable to the current office of Drug Control Policy - to develop a peer-reviewed strategy to stabilize the levels of greenhouse gases in our atmosphere in order to prevent dangerous disruption of the climate system. That is a goal we have already agreed to-- it is the goal of the Rio Treaty on climate change which the Senate ratified on October 15, 1992.

The bill also will create the infrastructure needed to develop the innovative technologies that will address global warming and it would fund those efforts. With this bill, research and development and action on greenhouse gas mitigation would have a home centered in the Department of Energy from which they could be aggressively pursued.

In crafting a climate change strategy, the White House office would be instructed by this proposal to consider four key elements – emissions mitigation, technology development, adaptation needs, and further scientific research. Right now in our debates and work on this problem, all four of these critical needs do not make it into the discussion.

As Senator Byrd has said, this bill is meant to complement, not replace, other greenhouse gas mitigation measures. By creating a process by which we receive expert evaluation of the challenge we face and fund research to meet it, this legislation will become the tree from which other climate change measures will branch.

In the end, our shared responsibility is clear – we must take action and take action soon to stop the overheating of our planet. In their long and distinguished careers in the Senate, Robert C. Byrd and Ted Stevens have not only made history, they have shown they understand history and the responsibility for leadership history places on those of us privileged to serve here. In this bipartisan breakthrough proposal on global climate change, they have once again shown the rest of us a way to move forward. For that, I thank them.

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