

INTRODUCTION OF THE SAFE
CLIMATE ACT

HON. HENRY A. WAXMAN

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, June 20, 2006

Mr. WAXMAN. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased today to join 12 of my colleagues in introducing the Safe Climate Act. Global warming is the greatest environmental challenge of our time, and we have a short window in which to act to prevent profound changes to the climate system. Unless we seize the opportunity to act now, our legacy to our children and grandchildren will be an unstable and dangerous planet.

There are different approaches that can be taken to climate legislation. Some bills seek a symbolic recognition of the problem. Others are premised on what may be politically achievable in the near terms.

The Safe Climate Act is drafted on a different premise: It reflects what the science tells us we need to do to protect our children and future generations from irreversible and catastrophic global warming. The bill has aggressive requirements to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases. But the reality is, these are the reductions that scientists say we need to achieve to preserve a safe climate for future generations.

The science clearly tells us what we need to do—we must reduce emissions of greenhouse gases, starting now and continuing over the next few decades. To achieve this, we have to grow our economy into a new and cleaner future. It's simply too late for legislative baby steps.

I have been working to address the threat of global warming for many years. At first, the scientists' warnings about global warming came like a few early drops of rain. We knew that our activities were emitting large quantities of greenhouse gases. And we knew that greenhouse gases trap the sun's heat and warm the planet. When scientists found steadily rising quantities of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere, they hypothesized that our activities could warm the planet, with unknown but potentially troubling consequences.

Over the years, these scattered warnings grew to a stream, then to a rushing river of danger signals. Over 10 years ago, the science and the threat of global warming were clear. That's why I introduced the Global Climate Protection Act of 1992, which would have frozen U.S. emissions of carbon dioxide at 1990 levels. But Congress failed to act.

Now the river of warnings has become a flooding torrent. We can no longer ignore the evidence of global warming. We're now just starting to experience some results of climate change. And they are not good.

Eight of the ten warmest years on record have occurred in the last decade. As the earth warms, its ice is melting. From the glaciers in Glacier National Park, to the snows of Kilimanjaro and the Larson B ice-shelf in Antarctica, ice that has been here since the last ice age is disappearing or already gone. The permafrost supporting towns and roads in Alaska is melting rapidly, and the summer sea ice in the Arctic Ocean is diminishing each year. These are changes we can see with our own eyes.

The seasons are changing—maple sugar producers in Vermont are tapping trees earlier,

plants are flowering earlier, and birds are migrating earlier. These changes are happening across the globe. And with warmer weather come bugs that are no longer being killed by the winter cold, such as the beetles that are destroying forests across the Southwest and Alaska.

The scientists have long predicted that as the oceans warm, rainfall episodes, storms, and hurricanes will become more intense. Last year broke hurricane records, and America experienced the devastating results of just a few such storms with Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. The scientists have been proven right about global warming, over and over again, across the planet. We should start listening to them.

Now they are telling us that we have about 10 years to act to avoid being locked into irreversible global warming on a scale that will transform the planet. The scientists have identified a global temperature rise of just 3.6 degrees Fahrenheit as enough to produce undeniably dangerous consequences, such as 20 feet or more of sea level rise, which would flood large parts of Florida and New York City, as well as huge population centers in other countries. And scientists have calculated the quantity of atmospheric greenhouse gases that would very likely cause such a temperature rise. The nations of the world must keep greenhouse gases below that level to avoid irreversible dangerous global warming.

The United States emits more greenhouse gases than any other country in the world—about 20 percent of the total worldwide. We simply cannot avoid catastrophic global warming without substantial cuts in U.S. emissions. Of course, every nation will have to do its part. According to the best science, under any plausible scenario of future international actions to stabilize the climate, the United States will eventually need to reduce its emissions by about 80 percent.

Fortunately, we have some time to get there, as long as we start reducing our total emissions now. And that's what the Safe Climate Act does. It caps U.S. emissions in 2010, and then gradually reduces them by just 2 percent per year until 2020. This gives us 15 years to deploy the cleaner technologies that we already have but aren't using much, such as hybrid vehicles and wind power. After 2020, emissions must fall under the legislation by roughly 5 percent per year, as more advanced technologies, such as biofuels from waste materials and capturing carbon dioxide from power plants, become widely available.

The Safe Climate Act reduces emissions through a flexible, market-based emissions trading program, as well as complementary requirements for cleaner cars and more electricity from renewable energy and efficiency. The Environmental Protection Agency and the Department of Energy would oversee these programs nationally, while states would retain their authority to act on the State level. In effect, the Safe Climate Act sets the targets and then unleashes market forces and American ingenuity to solve the problem.

This sounds ambitious, and it is. But it is also completely doable, once we decide to act. Look at what we've already achieved. In just over 30 years, from the passage of the Clean Air Act in 1970 to 2002, we reduced air pollution from automobiles by over 60 percent. We achieved these reductions even as the total number of vehicle miles traveled increased by 160 percent and GDP grew by 166 percent.

From 1990 to 1996, in just 6 years, we ended production of key chemicals destroying the earth's protective tropospheric ozone layer and shifted to substitutes. Those chemicals had been widely used throughout the economy in applications from air conditioning and refrigeration to solvents and fire suppression.

In each case, entrenched industries told Congress that changes of these magnitudes would be impossible to achieve without massive economic dislocation. And in each case, they were wrong.

We've ignored the threat of global warming for almost too long, but we still have an opportunity if we act now. I urge my colleagues to join me in cosponsoring this critically important bill, and I urge the committee of jurisdiction to consider it without further delay. We must face and overcome the challenge of global warming, and the Safe Climate Act is the way to do it.

TRIBUTE TO SONDRA FROHLICH

HON. HOWARD L. BERMAN

OF CALIFORNIA

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Tuesday, June 20, 2006

Mr. BERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to Sondra Frohlich, who is celebrating her retirement from her position as executive director of the Sherman Oaks Chamber of Commerce. Sondra has overseen the Sherman Oaks Chamber since 1997 and has been an active leader in the community for over 40 years.

Sondra has been a dynamic force on the Sherman Oaks Chamber. During her tenure as executive director, the chamber experienced a 100-member net increase and expanded its involvement in business and community improvements. She was one of the founders of the Village at Sherman Oaks Business Improvement Districts, which has blossomed into one of the valley's most recognized destinations for shopping. She was also the incorporator of the Sherman Oaks Business Improvement District to the State of California.

Ms. Frohlich has enjoyed many other accomplishments in her position as executive director of the chamber. She was responsible for the expansion of the Sherman Oaks Street Fair through her engagement of professional management. She coordinated the chamber fight for business tax relief and worker's compensation reforms. She won national recognition for excellence of the chamber's website.

Outside of her work with the Sherman Oaks Chamber, Ms. Frohlich has been very involved in the larger San Fernando Valley community. A true leader, she has served as president of the San Fernando Valley Business and Professional Association, the Northridge Republican Women's Club, and twice has led the Rotary Club of Studio City-Sherman Oaks. She is currently the secretary of the Mid-Valley Community Police Council, a support group to the Van Nuys division of the Los Angeles Police Department, as well as a member of the Board of Directors of the Circle of Care Foundation.

Sondra Frohlich is an outstanding community leader and activist. Her commitment to the San Fernando Valley is impressive, and her leadership is evident. Even with her imminent