



National Climate Ethics Campaign

STATEMENTS MADE AT RELEASE OF THE 'STATEMENT OF OUR NATION'S MORAL OBLIGATION TO ADDRESS CLIMATE CHANGE'

U.S. Senate Environment and Public Works Hearing Room

November 30, 2011

Opening Statement by Bob Doppelt, Coordinator of the National Climate Ethics Campaign

Welcome, My name is Bob Doppelt and I am the coordinator of the National Climate Ethics Campaign. The campaign is a non-partisan effort launched almost a year ago by people representing 27 different organizations and constituencies from across the nation who came together to declare that our great nation has a moral and ethical obligation to meaningfully address climate change.

We are here today to announce that The National Climate Ethics Campaign is sending the 'Statement of our nations moral obligation to address climate change' to every member of Congress, to the President, and to every governor in the nation.

The statement has been signed by more than 1,250 current and former elected officials as well as representatives from the business, labor, youth, financial, academic, psychological health, physical health, conservation, racial justice, civil rights, development, and faith communities from almost every state in the nation.

The statement declares that climate change is a very real, dangerous, and rapidly worsening problem with deep moral implications. Our response must therefore not be driven solely by near-term economic or national self-interest. Nor can we use scientific uncertainty to delay action.

Morality is about the principles that guide how we live our lives and how we treat other people. Our behavior and practices are shaped by what we determine is right and wrong, and fair and unfair.

We believe that our nation's response to climate change must be based on three moral principles that have long guided our country. Indeed, these moral principles are what distinguish our nation for others, and helped make us the envy of the world.

The first of these principles is that we have a moral obligation to protect current and future generations from unjustifiable suffering and death.

If at all possible—we should always strive to help others. If that is not possible, we should at least do no harm. When our behaviors and practices cause suffering and harm to

others, we are not engaged in proper activity. Our legal system is based on this moral precept.

Over the past century, the U.S. has been the largest total contributor to the greenhouse gasses that are disrupting the climate. Today, we remain the largest emitter after China. The energy that generated these emissions powered the growth of our economy and did much good. But today, our emissions are contributing to a great deal of suffering. This is morally wrong.

The second moral duty is to honor the principles of justice and equity.

Climate change places unjust burdens on the poor, the elderly, the infirm, women, children, communities of color, and indigenous populations such as Native Alaskans and Native Americans. These vulnerable communities have contributed little to the problem, but will suffer the greatest impacts from climate change. This is unjust. We have a moral obligation to reverse this wrong.

And the third moral principle is to protect the natural environment that provides everything that makes life possible, from the water we drink, to the food we eat, to the air that we breathe. Climate change is degrading ecological systems, driving wildlife to extinction, and undermining the basis of our economy.

We call on every American to acknowledge and recommit to these moral principles now by rapidly and significantly reducing greenhouse gas emissions in their homes, places of work and government.

We call on every citizen to actively prepare for the consequences of climate change that now cannot be avoided.

Moreover, we call on every individual to insist that their government adopt policies to achieve those goals, and to also provide sufficient resources to help the most vulnerable here and abroad to do the same.

As we make this shift, we must insist on a just transition that equitably distributes both the costs and the benefits of solutions to everyone.

Yesterday's announcement by the World Meteorological organization that 2011 is one of the hottest on record and that humans are the cause, the recent report on extreme weather by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, and news from the International Energy Agency that we have just five years left to make big changes if we are to avoid very serious climate consequences, means that the risks of inaction are exceedingly high.

Yet, the National Climate Ethics campaign believes that the benefits of acting on our moral principles are far greater.

We have the knowledge, skills, and technologies to successfully reduce global warming. If we focus on the moral principles that made our nation great, our spirits will rise, and our optimism about the future will grow by leaps and bounds.

America's can do spirit, grounded in long held moral principles, will allow us to grow a sustainable economy that creates millions of good jobs in clean energy fields, supports healthy families, and builds vibrant communities. We will once again become a role model that people worldwide seek to emulate.

With us today to comment on these issues is Congressman Henry Waxman. Senator Barbara Boxer will join us later to make a comment as well. Before she arrives, Paul Ordal from her staff will read a prepared statement. He will be followed by Bruce Wolpe, who will read a statement from Representative Henry Waxman, who was scheduled to speak in person today but has held up in committee and cannot make it.

Following the comments, we will hear from Virginia State Senator Mary Margaret Whipple, who will speak to these issues from the state and local perspective.

Following the presentations by the elected officials, you will hear from 9 distinguished speakers who will briefly comment on the moral and ethical implications of climate change as they relate to their sector, issue or constituency.

Senator Barbara Boxer's (D-CA) Statement on the Nation's Responsibility to Address Climate Change (read by Paul Ordal)

Wishing that climate change will go away is not a policy – it is a fantasy. Despite what a vocal minority would have us believe, problems do not go away by pretending they do not exist.

It is time for that vocal minority to face reality, because the body of evidence is overwhelming and the world's leading scientists agree. Climate change is real, human activities are the primary cause, and the warming planet poses a significant risk to people and the environment.

In its September 9 editorial, the *Los Angeles Times* stated, "All scientific theories have doubters, but what is remarkable about climate science is the degree of certainty and agreement among researchers."

The science is clear, the time for talk has passed, and the need for action is now. It is our moral obligation and legislative responsibility to address this enormous global challenge, which will impact every nation around the world. If we do not act, the people in harm's way are those most vulnerable.

The only way to make real, substantial progress in finding solutions to climate change is through international cooperation. I am sending a message to the UN Climate Conference in Durban stressing that every nation must do its part to ensure that the worst effects of climate change are avoided.

I am proud that President Obama and my own State of California are continuing to move forward with specific measures that are already reducing harmful air pollution. For example, the federal government has made great progress in improving fuel economy, and California has an initiative to install one million solar roofs.

As Chairman of the Environment and Public Works Committee, I reaffirm my commitment to work as hard as I can to reduce the dangerous air pollution that causes climate change and harms the health and safety of people around the world.

I pledge to do everything I can to stand up to climate change deniers, to shine a light on the truth, and to build support for taking common-sense steps to address this critical global problem.

Our children and our grandchildren are counting on us to rise to this challenge.

Statement provided by Rep. Henry A. Waxman (D-CA), Ranking Member, House Committee on Energy and Commerce (read by Staff Member Bruce Wolpe)

Climate change is a scientific issue; it is a policy and political issue; but above all, it is a moral issue. We have a moral obligation to protect our planet for future generations. Yet we are ignoring our responsibilities.

You call upon America to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to avoid the worst effects of extreme climate change. You recognize that we must prepare for the consequences of the warming that we cannot avoid. And you demand that policies be put in place to achieve these goals.

The challenge is great, and the task ahead is difficult.

I have been profoundly disappointed in the environmental record of this Congress. In fact, I believe this is the most anti-environmental House of Representatives in history.

The House has taken over 170 votes this year against the environment, including votes to dismantle the Clean Air Act, to bar EPA from doing its job, and to block actions that protect public health from pollution in our air and water.

The House has voted twenty-one times on provisions to block actions that address climate change. A majority of the House voted to deny even the basic science of climate change.

The House Republican position on climate has become logically incoherent. Republicans say they oppose U.S. efforts to reduce CO₂ emissions because they will put our nation at a competitive disadvantage. Yet at the same time, they vote to defund the State Department's efforts to build international support for joint action.

They say the science is "uncertain," yet they reject our requests to bring leading scientists before our House Committee to clarify the facts.

They oppose comprehensive legislation like the 2009 energy bill as too big and expensive. Then they object to EPA's modest efforts on the grounds they will be too small to make a difference.

Absent action, the signs of climate change will soon be undeniable. But by then, it will be too late to avoid devastating harm to humans and ecosystems across the global.

I am convinced that the American people do understand the threat – and they want us to act responsibly to meet it.

The past year has reminded us of the terrible human and economic costs of extreme weather events, which climate change will intensify. But Americans are also optimists. Americans know we can move to cleaner energy that cuts pollution and grows the economy.

As so often in America's history, we stand at the crossroads of great peril and great opportunity. You are calling upon us to act, to meet the threat and seize the opportunity.

Virginia State Senator Mary Margaret Whipple

Good afternoon. I am Senator Mary Margaret Whipple from Virginia. I serve on the Board of Directors of the National Caucus of Environmental Legislators, and while I do not speak for them today, I know that there are many legislators across our fifty states who believe as I do that taking action to reduce climate change is the moral imperative of our time.

Legislators come from different faith backgrounds, different political parties, different regions, different educational, economic, and social backgrounds. And yet we have much in common: I think we all take our responsibilities seriously to make this world a better place for our constituents and future generations. For myself, just thinking about my five grandchildren inspires me to put a top priority on our stewardship of the earth.

Although climate change is a global problem, the impacts are strongly felt at the state and local levels. Similarly, although policies to address climate change are needed at the international and national levels, most of the implementation will occur at state and local levels.

Already, we're experiencing massive local impacts, such as the drought in Texas; the massive flooding along the Missouri and Mississippi Rivers this year; and the heavy downpours that severe storms like Hurricane Irene have delivered.

In fact, our state legislatures have not waited for the federal government to take action. While debate continues on a national renewable portfolio standard for utilities, for example, xx states have adopted an RPS; some states have denied permits to coal-fired power plants; some have set higher more energy-efficient building standards; others require state fleets to purchase the most fuel efficient vehicles or to use a certain percentage of biofuels. My point is this: many states recognize the urgency of the situation and are taking action now.

Our cities, counties and towns are also moving forward on reducing carbon emissions. My own locality of Arlington, Virginia, has adopted an ambitious Community Energy and Sustainability plan to reduce greenhouse gas emissions per capita from the current 13.4 metric tons to no more than 3.0 metric tons by 2050. Jay Fisette, Chairman of the Arlington County Board and leader of this effort, is here today and will be available to answer questions later.

Now then is the time for all our elected representatives -- federal, state, and local – to respond to this call of the climate ethics campaign, to step out and lead, and to actually fund the efforts needed to deal with the crisis of climate change.

Wood Turner, Vice President of Sustainability for Stonyfield Farm

Hello. I'm Wood Turner, VP of Sustainability Innovation for organic yogurt maker Stonyfield Farm, and I'm pleased to be here not only as a voice of business on this important panel but also as a surrogate for our inspiring founder and CEO, Gary Hirshberg, who has for three decades been among the leading voices for corporate leadership on environmental issues like global climate change. Gary thinks deeply about the ethical basis for our collective response to climate change and had very much hoped to be here today. He sends his sincerest regrets.

I'll start by offering a quote from Gary on why the notion of climate ethics is relevant to him and to our business:

“As a business person, I think we have an ethical imperative to do everything we can to ensure a solid and sustainable economy for our children and grandchildren. That's why my company has invested heavily in climate protection -- boosting efficiency, helping grow markets for renewables, reducing greenhouse gas emissions, and, as a result, seeing enhanced financial performance. Any other approach to doing business compromises our economic and environmental legacies.”

As Gary makes quite clear, our perspective as a company driven by mission *equally* to protect and restore the planet **AND** prove that business and environmental sustainability are not in conflict is that the most ethical thing businesses can continue to do is to continue to succeed at what they do. And as our story shows, one of the most essential ways to ensure long-term success is to understand how a focus on climate solutions is fundamentally a sound, even savvy, business decision.

For us, the notion that we cared as much about environmental protection as moms did helped us establish and maintain a profound brand of loyalty with our consumers from day one. But as we matured into a company with not only real sales but also real environmental impacts, the fact that we were motivated to aggressively reduce those impacts to the benefit of our bottom line established a compelling business case.

Gary had long maintained that our commitment to finding solutions to environmental problems was tantamount to our finding solutions to our biggest business challenges – namely that if we could make a concerted effort **not** to waste energy, **not** to waste water, to generate as little waste as possible, we could avoid significant costs to the company. First, we started measuring our impacts (and became the first US manufacturer to offset 100% of our facility greenhouse emissions). But that wasn't enough. We built an ambitious program around the biggest environmental impact areas in the company – a program we call MAP, or our Mission Action Program – and deployed teams across functions throughout the company to tackle those impacts. Importantly, those impacts have gone far beyond our manufacturing facility in Londonderry NH. These teams look at

ingredient impacts throughout the nation and the world, transportation and logistics impacts, even employee impacts even outside of work.

The result of these teams' five years of highly focused work? A 46% absolute reduction in the climate impacts of our distribution/logistics. An 11% absolute reduction in the climate impacts of our manufacturing facility. A 48% absolute reduction in the climate impacts of our multipack yogurt packaging. The prevention of 63 tractor trailer loads of plastic from our packaging lightweighting efforts. The diversion of 57% less waste to incinerators. Not to mention reduced use of water and breakthroughs in our efforts to reduce the impacts from the ingredients that go into our yogurt.

And while I could sit here and testify with deep sincerity that the reduction of our impact on climate change has come out of a deep and abiding commitment to protecting the planet, that would only skim the surface. The fact of the matter is, being a climate focused company has been essential to our growth and success. In the short time since 2006 when we launched the MAP effort, we've been able to avoid over \$18 million in real costs to the company. More efficient distribution? Real money. More efficient manufacturing? Real money. Less packaging material, less waste disposal? Real money. That's money we've been able to put back into the business to create or maintain jobs and otherwise boost our competitiveness.

That's our climate ethics story. Reducing our impact on climate change is deeply embedded in our business strategy. Energy costs WILL increase. Disruptions to supply chains due to extreme weather – whether you consider it climate-related or not – will put real economic pressure on companies. Costs to protect the security of polluting sources of energy we're addicted to using will continue to burden our economy and the consumers our businesses rely upon. Forward-thinking business leaders understand this. They understand that business opportunities will be lost – frankly they HAVE been lost – to countries that have already invested heavily in renewables and far-reaching efficiency.

We owe it to our kids and to their kids to leave behind a true 21st century economy that will compete globally and continue to create jobs and opportunity in this country. To think that could happen without putting real business ingenuity and strong public policy to work to attack this enormous global challenge is to be in a shocking form of denial.

But I'm incredibly hopeful – our company is incredibly hopeful – that leadership will prevail, that responsibility will prevail, that an American ethic will prevail – that we won't saddle our children with a crisis they didn't create NOR an economy that can't guarantee them the safety and prosperity they deserve. We have the power and the creativity to cultivate a vibrant, sustainable marketplace that can support not only life on Earth but also our way of life. Let's get on with it.

Hilary Shelton, Director of the NAACP Washington Bureau and the Senior Vice President for Advocacy and Policy

Good afternoon. My name is Hilary Shelton and I am the Director of the NAACP Washington Bureau and the Senior Vice President for Advocacy and Policy.

In existence for more than 102 years, the NAACP, with more than 2,200 membership units in every state, is our nation's oldest, largest and most widely-recognized grassroots based civil rights organization.

I would like to begin by thanking the more than 1,100 groups and individuals who have taken the time to review this important document and agree with its contents by signing on.

I would also like to take a minute and express my special appreciation to Jacqui Patterson, who is the Director of the NAACP Environmental and Climate Justice Program.

Jacqui has worked tirelessly over the past two years not only on the development of this document but also on raising the awareness of NAACP members and friends as to the environmental threats with which we are all faced and our rights as humans to live in safe and healthy communities.

In light of the NAACP's mandate of upholding civil and human rights for all, we view advancing the Nation's Moral Obligation on Climate Change as vital. Climate change threatens all of us, and as we continue to witness, its effects are particularly devastating to communities of color and low-income communities in the US as well as in developing countries.

It is critical that we all join together to advocate for solutions to mitigate climate change.

It is imperative that we also provide adequate resources for adaptation to the effects of climate change, especially to the communities and countries that are already, and will increasingly continue to be, affected by the ravages of climate change.

As we have already witnessed too many times, the frequency and severity of extreme weather events is on the increase, and sadly the people who are disproportionately affected the most are the most vulnerable among us.

As the statement we are introducing today says, ""the risks of inaction are too high."

The mission of the NAACP is to ensure that every person, regardless of his or her race, ethnicity, income, gender or disability is able to pursue a life of good health and equal opportunities.

Thus, it is clear to us that it is ethically and morally imperative that we as individuals and collectively as a nation to do all we can to ensure that the factors which we know contribute to climate change are abridged if not eliminated and that communities – all communities – are given adequate resources to deal with the damage we have already inflicted on our environment.

All members of the human race deserve nothing less.

"Freedom, Fairness, and the Future" by Reverend Jim Ball, Vice President of the Evangelical Environmental Network

Our country has always been about creating a better future, because we are a nation of immigrants. Our forbearers came here to create a better future for themselves and their children, and of course this is still happening. That's why the Statue of Liberty perhaps best embodies who we are as a nation: a beacon of liberty proclaiming to the world that here is a country where you have the freedom to create a better life.

We are a freedom-loving people because we know that to create a better future you must have the freedom to do so. The two great wars fought on American soil, the American Revolution and the Civil War, were fought for freedom. We are the beneficiaries of the blood of patriots who gave their lives on the altar of freedom.

Because we Americans have believed throughout our history – and still want to believe – that the future can be better, we also have a strong belief in fairness. For individuals to be able to create a better future, things need to be fair. Everybody needs a fair shake.

For the poor in developing countries today, the tyranny of global warming is the equivalent of what sparked our American Revolution, taxation without representation. Through a process in which they have no say, by decisions made by those far, far away, are profound limitations placed upon their freedom to create a better life for themselves and their loved ones. It isn't fair.

For freedom-loving, fair-minded people like us, global warming is a worldwide scourge, similar to how communism was in the twentieth century. Global warming is a freedom denier, a freedom destroyer, not only in terms of denying opportunities for individuals, but potentially for the cause of freedom in entire countries.

The creators of the movie *Planet of the Apes* produced one of the greatest endings in movie history. Charlton Heston's character, Taylor, rides along the beach until he comes to what's left of the Statue of Liberty, our greatest symbol of freedom. "Damn you all to hell," he says of those who blew up the Earth with nuclear weapons. But, guess what, we're still here. We didn't blow ourselves up.

While we still have time to overcome global warming, we are quickly running out of time. Let's work together to create a better future for present and future generations. It's time to be great again by overcoming global warming. America can rise to this challenge, because that's who we are: fair-minded, freedom-loving people who live to create a brighter future.

Bobby Prestronk, National Association of County and City Health Officials

Bob, I'd like to thank the National Climate Ethics Campaign for convening us to call attention to this important issue. I would also like to thank Congressman Waxman and Senator Boxer for their leadership on this issue that affects the public's health.

I am Bobby Pestronk representing the National Association of County and City Health Officials, NACCHO. NACCHO's vision is health, equity, and well-being for all people in their communities through public health policies and services. NACCHO represents the nation's

local health departments, each a governmental public health presence in communities nationwide.

A public health ethics perspective recognizes that people and their physical environment are interdependent, that people are responsible to act on the basis of what they know, and that action is often required in the absence of all the information one would like to have.

In this regard, climate change has serious and far-reaching health implications for present and future generations. We're already seeing the effects of climate change on health, such as emerging tropical diseases in new areas, deaths from heat waves and floods, food shortages and increased allergies and asthma, and the costs of addressing these threats. Leaders at every level of government must take steps to prevent these bad outcomes and protect their communities. The moral risks are too high not to act. Local health departments can help address these challenges- the life and health of Americans depend on it.

A study in 2008 by NACCHO, the Environmental Defense Fund, and George Mason University found that more than three-quarters of local health departments expected their communities to experience climate change in the next 20 years. Yet, more than eighty percent of local health departments lacked sufficient expertise to create effective adaptation or mitigation plans. And, while more than three-quarters of local health departments thought that additional resources would significantly improve their ability to deal with the public health impacts of climate change, since 2008, local health departments have lost over 34,000 jobs to layoffs and attrition.

Given the magnitude of health impacts due to climate change, it is imperative that policymakers take action now to ensure that our communities can work to minimize climate change and its effects, as well as to increase our capacity to adapt to climate change. We can and must make a difference.

Luisa Saffioti, President, Psychologists for Social Responsibility

Climate change is one of the greatest moral issues humanity has ever faced because it is caused by human behavior. Psychology knows behavior is a moral issue when it harms people and the planet. Psychology also has many tools to help people change their behavior. As psychologists, we have a moral obligation to use those tools to prevent the suffering caused by climate change and to protect the natural environment that is the source of all life.

Without a healthy environment, people and communities cannot be psychologically and physically well. Human beings' relationship to the natural world is essential for psychological health, including for brain development. Yet human behavior is so damaging to the environment, that, at this point, we are risking not only our well-being but also the future survival of resources vital to the life of our communities.

The impact of extreme climate events poses serious mental-health challenges to millions of Americans and billions of others worldwide who will develop severe and persistent anxiety, depression, post-traumatic stress, aggression, and other troubled

behavior. The increase in stress and mental illness will harm interpersonal relationships, make people less able to work or study constructively, and impair the day-to-day functioning of our society and our economy. Hurricane Katrina demonstrated all of these outcomes in microcosm to the American people. Research strongly predicts that the psychological impact of climate change will be many times worse than the physical impact.

To deter this psychological harm, bold action is necessary now, using psychological tools to promote patterns of thinking, motivation and behavior that are conducive to personal, social, and environmental well-being and responsibility.

We need to break out of thinking that keeps us stuck in limiting ideas about scarcity, growth, and consumption, AND we need to vigorously engage the human, moral traits of cooperation, empathy, fairness, efficacy, imagination, and creativity. This will generate a new ethos of human thinking, feeling and action that creates greater equity, reduced consumption, and deeper connection to the natural environment.

As psychologists, we know that moving out of passivity and hopelessness into active engagement promotes psychological well-being and productivity, which we can then channel into creating the environmentally sustainable cultures and policies that are possible and that are necessary for long-term peace, justice and wellness.

Tim Warman, Vice President for Climate and Energy, National Wildlife Federation

Good afternoon, I'm Tim Warman, V.P. Climate and Energy, National Wildlife Federation. NWF is America's largest conservation organization celebrating our 75 anniversary this year. We are pleased to be here.

Current projections are that continuing to emit carbon pollution as we do now will put 1/3

of all wildlife species at severe risk of extinction by 2100. A child born today may witness the great die-off of the 21st century.

Such preventable loss is morally and ethically wrong. Leaving our children a denuded planet not only deprives them of the wonders of nature and wild places, but it threatens their very existence.

Roughly 100 years ago the last passenger pigeon died a lonely death. We humans carry on never knowing the wonder of millions of these birds blackening the sky. Nevertheless, the ecosystem is vast and sturdy and the loss of one species or 10 or every 100 species is unlikely to break it.

But the loss of tens of thousands of species can hardly occur without tearing the very fabric of nature apart.

For me personally and for the National Wildlife Federation destruction of nature by carbon pollution and climate change is perhaps the greatest moral and ethical challenge yet

faced by humans. If we cannot muster the compassion for all creatures needed to solve this problem I am afraid we will be found wanting.

We have no morally defensible option but to share planet Earth with all the creatures of nature.

Today the launch of the Climate Ethics Campaign gives me renewed hope. It gives me hope because it represents a groundswell of Americans from all walks of life that are stepping up and acknowledging our moral responsibility to say enough is enough to carbon pollution. We do this for our own benefit and most importantly we do this for our children's future.

Statements were also made, but not recorded, by: Joe Uehlein of the Labor Network for Sustainability regarding the climate impacts on organized labor; Lilian Molina of the Energy Action Coalition on climate impacts on youth; and Anne Goodman from the Women's Network for a Sustainable Future on climate impacts on women.

After the speakers finished, Senator Barbara Boxer made a personal appearance and gave an unrecorded talk about the importance of the National Climate Ethics Campaign and the need to address climate change.

Closing Statement by Bob Doppelt

I want to close by saying that the release of the climate ethics statement is a beginning, not the end of our efforts. From this point forward will help people from all walks of life across America launch climate ethics campaigns in their communities and in their organizations.

We encourage all Americans to call on their family, friends, professional colleagues, and their leaders to acknowledge and abide by our nations long held moral principles by significantly reducing emissions, preparing for climate change, and demanding public policies to achieve those goals.

What lies ahead of us will require exemplary levels of principled action.

We must respond by drawing on the goodness, compassion, and commitment to equity and justice that lies within us all.

If we commit to abiding by our long-held moral principles, our nation will rekindle the sense of noble purpose and hope for the better future for all that has made us great. Thank you for joining us today.