



Department of Social Development and World Peace

3211 FOURTH STREET NE • WASHINGTON DC 20017-1194 • FAX 202-541-3339

WEBSITE: WWW.USCCB.ORG/SDWP

June 16, 2005

Dear Senator:

On behalf of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, we urge you to support any amendment to S.10, the Energy Policy Act of 2005 that will genuinely help mitigate the adverse effects of climate change, particularly as they affect the poor and other vulnerable populations.

Given that the needs of the poor are so often neglected, we urge you to place their concerns front and center during the debate about climate change. Due to where they live and their limited resources, the poor will experience most directly the possible harmful effects of climate change, including potential escalating energy costs, work displacement and health problems. This is true here in the United States as well as abroad. Further research on the possible impact of climate change on the poor, and the need for programs to help the poor adapt and mitigate the worst effects should be a priority.

Although the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops takes no position on many of the detailed provisions of S. 10 or pending climate change legislation, we have worked with key senators and are grateful that the Climate Stewardship and Innovation Act of 2005 specifically addresses the needs of the poor here and abroad.

For too long, the debate about climate change has been polarized. The science surrounding climate change is often used more as a weapon than as a source of wisdom, insight or guidance. The motives of many are impugned. In this atmosphere, the search for the common good of the human family, as well as the planet, is neglected or lost. Too often, the voices of the poor and of poor countries are muffled or ignored.

While there are many technical aspects that need to be considered in addressing global climate change, we recognize our moral responsibility of stewardship. Our actions and decisions, particularly those regarding our use of energy resources, have a profound effect, not only today but also for future generations. While there may not be full scientific consensus or complete certainty as to the consequences of climate change, there seems to be a sufficient scientific consensus that prudence would dictate taking preventive and mitigating action.

In a few weeks, the G-8 nations will meet in Scotland and climate change is likely to be a major topic on the agenda. The United States bears a special responsibility to lead and help shape responses that serve not only its own interests but those of the entire human family. The adoption of even modest efforts could help send a signal that the time has come to move forward. Technological advancements and entrepreneurship are hallmarks of our society. Applying them innovatively could help usher in a more environmentally benign impact on global climate.

Thank you for your attention to our perspective concerning the important issue of global climate change.

Sincerely yours,

Most Reverend John H. Ricard, S.S.J.
Bishop of Pensacola-Tallahassee
Chairman, Committee on International Policy