

**AMERICAN METEOROLOGICAL SOCIETY CORPORATE FORUM
MARCH 22, 2007**

CONGRESSMAN MARK UDALL

Good evening, I'm so pleased to be with you tonight. I would like to thank Dr. Dabberdt for the kind introduction. I know that you had a full day today and you will have another tomorrow discussing federal weather and climate science programs and avenues for partnership with private and academic organizations.

Weather and climate science and related work are hot topics right now. Let me first talk about a timely topic, climate change, and we can turn to the budgets of NASA and other federal agencies if you have questions afterwards.

The movement in Congress on climate change over the last few months has been very encouraging.

The recent release of the policy summary from the Fourth Assessment Report by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), Working Group I, has also brought awareness to a growing scientific consensus.

It specifically reports that the "warming of the climate system is unequivocal" -- sea temperatures are rising, glaciers are melting, and air temperatures worldwide are increasing, all of which will have major impacts on the world that we know.

This consensus among scientists has helped clarify the issue for the public and policy makers, although there is still disagreement the impact of human activities on climate change. But that too is moving in a positive direction.

I'm sure most of you know, former Vice-President Al Gore testified before a joint hearing of the Science and Technology Committee and the Energy and Commerce Committee yesterday.

Through his recent film, "An Inconvenient Truth," and his slide show presentation, Mr. Gore has done much to raise awareness among both the public and policy makers about climate change.

As the science grows ever more convincing, fewer people are questioning whether climate change is occurring -- furthermore, many people now understand that human activity is contributing to global warming.

But whether or not all the scientific questions are resolved, it would be irresponsible NOT to take action now. Disagreement about the causes should not prevent us from tackling climate change with some policy mix of prevention, mitigation and adaptation.

That's why I support and encourage federal, as well as state and local, action to lessen our carbon emissions and minimize our impact on the environment.

I also believe we must acknowledge the interdependence of our social, economic and environmental systems and learn to anticipate and adjust to possible changes.

Even now, we are seeing the impacts of climate change in the form of growing disease and malnutrition across the globe.

And there are also impacts being felt here in the U.S. We in the West see them in the form of hotter summers and warmer winters, severe storms, drought, and reduced snowpack. The concentration of population and projections of future growth in the West point to the particular vulnerabilities we face with regard to climate variations and extremes.

Yet, despite our growing awareness of the reality of climate change, we are not doing all we can to address our research needs, much less the societal impacts.

Last month, the Science and Technology Committee held a hearing to review the recommendations of the National Academies' Earth Science and Applications "Decadal Survey."

The report highlighted the declining budget for earth science research, a critical component of climate science.

To quote the authors, "*At a time of unprecedented need, the nation's Earth observation satellite programs, once the envy of the world, are in disarray.*"

But the National Academies also laid out a clear set of research and applications goals, as well as a prioritized set of missions that they recommended that NASA and NOAA carry out over the next decade.

This roadmap provides a valuable tool for Congress and the White House to use as we struggle with a whole host of very tough funding decisions this year.

And it provides a compelling rationale for why investing in Earth science and applications initiatives makes sense for the nation—as well as a good understanding of what the consequences of failing to invest adequately are likely to be.

As a result, I have no doubt that we will be utilizing the Decadal Survey often as we carry out our oversight of NASA and NOAA over the remainder of the year.

And in addition to continued oversight, we in Congress will continue to tackle this issue with relevant and useful legislation.

Earlier this year, I reintroduced the Global Change Research and Data Management Act of 2007 with my colleague from South Carolina, Mr. Inglis. This bill updates the existing law that formally established the U.S. Global Change Research Program (USGCRP) in 1990.

Over the past decade, the USGCRP has significantly advanced our scientific knowledge of Earth's atmosphere and climate and has provided us with a wealth of new data and information about the functioning of our planet.

Yet the program has not produced sufficient information, both in terms of content and format, to be the basis for sound decisions. The program has focused nearly all of its resources and efforts on scientific inquiry.

Only one broad assessment of the impact of global change on society has ever been attempted by the program, and that assessment was completed nearly seven years after its Congressionally mandated deadline.

The local, state, regional, and national policymakers responsible for managing resources, fostering economic development, and responding to natural disasters need information to guide their decisions.

In my view, it is critical that Congress build upon current the USGCRP program to reorient it toward a user-driven research endeavor by requiring the Administration to identify and consult with members of the user community in developing the USGCRP research plan.

My bill would do that. It would also require the National Governors Association to evaluate the program plan from the perspective of the user community. These steps would help to ensure that the information needs of the policy community will be met as generously as the funding needs of the academic community.

My bill does not offer specific policy direction, but it does affirm the need for the continued strong federal support for global change research, and it does map out a new emphasis on the production of information needed to inform these important policy debates.

Ultimately, though, the best research will not help us if citizens, businesses, and governments do not take action to reduce carbon emissions and minimize the climate changes that are already underway.

Although federal action on climate change has lagged, it is encouraging to think that there is much activity on climate change at the state, local, industry, and individual levels.

In state legislatures, city council meetings, corporate boardrooms, college campuses, and community groups across the country, climate action programs are underway to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases.

As the world's leader in science and technology, it is incumbent on us to develop solutions that will protect our planet's resources and permit continued economic and social progress for our nation and for the world.

Before I conclude, I would like to make one more point about an issue that often comes up in any discussion about climate change – cost.

Many have said that implementing any regulatory scheme involving carbon would cost us millions of dollars and millions of jobs. Others argue that the potential costs to the economy are increasing with every day that we put off dealing with greenhouse gases.

I think that policies to address climate change will set off our energy revolution – like the industrial revolution did in the past. Our need to decrease the carbon in the atmosphere, as well as adjust to the climate changes already underway, will lead to whole new industries, as well as economic growth.

The annual AMS Corporate Forums have an important role to play here in bringing people together to brainstorm across disciplines, industries, and the academic, business, and federal arenas.

I am looking forward to continuing to work with my colleagues in Congress, as well as with all of you, to ensure that we do all that we can to address climate change and the impact that it is already having on our world.

I would be pleased to take any questions that you may have.