

**Statement of the Honorable Christine Todd Whitman  
before the  
United States Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works  
Subcommittee on Clean Air and Nuclear Safety  
Washington, D.C.**

**June 18, 2014**

Thank you, Mr. Chairman (Whitehouse) and Ranking Member Sessions for the opportunity to appear before you this morning. It has been some time since I have appeared before a Senate committee. It's good to be with you.

I must begin by expressing my frustration that the discussion about whether the Environmental Protection Agency has the legal authority to regulate carbon emissions is still taking place in some quarters.

The issue has been settled. EPA does have the authority. The law says so and the Supreme Court has said so twice. The matter should be put to rest.

Given that fact, the Agency has decided – properly, in my view – that it should act now to reduce carbon emissions to improve the quality of our air, protect the health of our people, and as part of an international effort to address global climate change.

For the United States, climate change is not just an environmental issue or an economic issue. Climate change also has very real implications for our national security, and those concerns must be an important part of the discussion.

We all know, after all, that the earth's climate is changing. We also know that human activity, although not solely responsible, as we should freely acknowledge, is both contributing to that change and increasing the risk that we will push the environment beyond the point at which we can repair it. And we should know that when one is contributing to a problem one has an obligation to contribute to its solution. That's what the EPA is trying to do.

There is, of course, honest disagreement about aspects of the Agency's power plant proposal, including whether it may be stretching its legal authority a bit too far in some parts of the proposed rule. I'm sure, however, that EPA will be made aware of any and all concerns during the comment period. But I hope the primary focus will be on the substance of the proposed rule, and not EPA's broad authority to promulgate it.

That being said, it's clear that the Clean Air Act, as it now stands, is an imperfect tool to address the unique challenges that climate change presents. Congressional action and leadership would be a preferable approach. But since Congress has declined to act, the EPA must.

Action will not come without cost. But since President Nixon created the EPA in 1970, it has sought to carry out its mandate in a balanced way. Environmental protection and economic prosperity are not mutually exclusive goals.

EPA has not always been able to reach a state of perfect equilibrium. It has, however, consistently struck a reasonable balance that protects both the health of the environment and the health of our economy.

To illustrate, from 1980 to 2012, the total emissions in the United States of six common air pollutants dropped by 67 percent. At the same time, our population grew by 38 percent, our energy consumption increased by 27 percent, and our GDP more than doubled, in constant dollars.

So more people, consuming more energy, emitted much less pollution without sacrificing economic growth. That is clear evidence of the balance the EPA has struck.

If the past is prologue, further reductions are achievable and affordable.

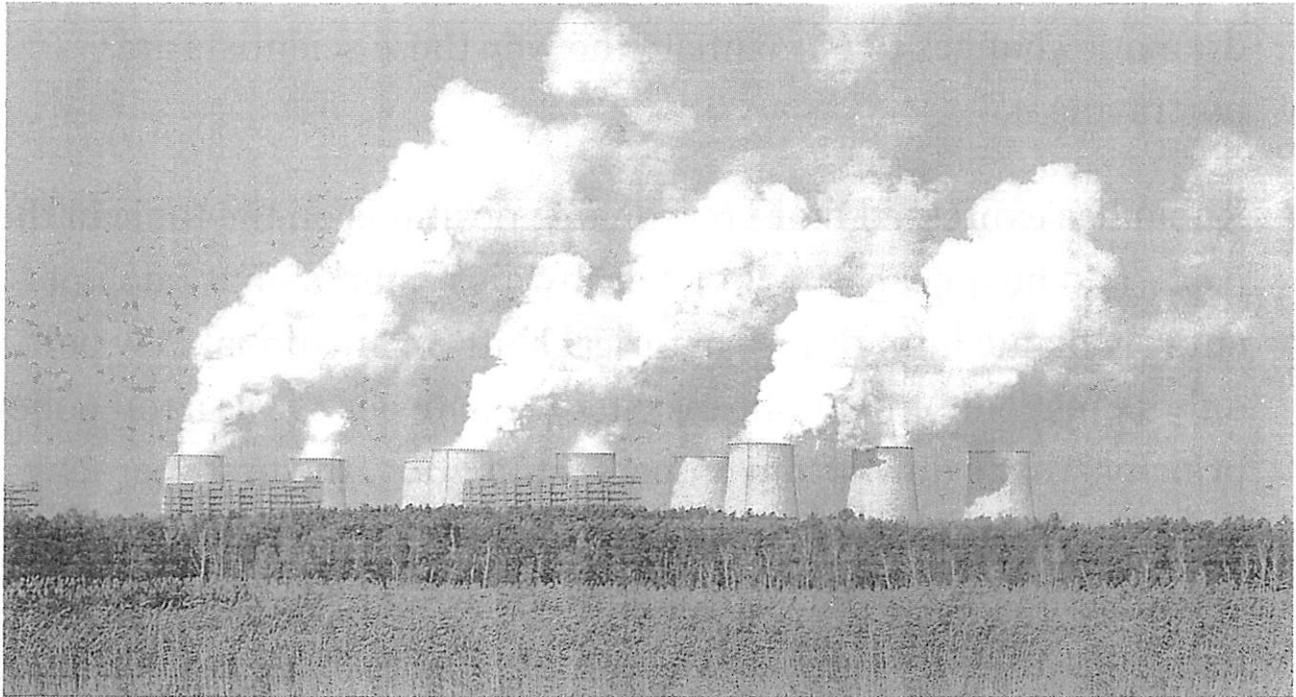
Mr. Chairman, my hope is that Congress will, at long last, acknowledge that climate change is real, that humans are contributing to it, and that the potential consequences of inaction are far greater than the projected costs of action.

We have a scientific consensus around this issue. We also need a political consensus.

The two parties were able to rally around a common purpose in the early days of modern environmental policymaking. It is urgent that they do so again.

Thank you.

## POLITICOMAGAZINE



IN THE ARENA

# **The Climate Is Changing. Republicans Need to Open Their Eyes Before It's Too Late.**

By CHRISTINE TODD WHITMAN | May 14, 2014

**T**his week, two teams of scientists announced that the West Antarctic ice sheet has begun collapsing, beginning what they call an “unstoppable” process that could raise sea levels by as much as 15 feet over time. “This is really happening,” Thomas P. Wagner, one of the researchers, told the *New York Times*. “There’s nothing to stop it now.”

The timing was especially unfortunate for Marco Rubio, the Florida Republican senator and 2016 hopeful, who had just cast doubt on

the phenomenon of human-induced climate change, telling ABC News, “I do not believe that human activity is causing these dramatic changes to our climate the way these scientists are portraying it.”

Rubio has expressed more reasonable positions on the topic in the past—and he quickly sought to clarify his remarks—but I do not entirely blame him for his rhetorical shift. In an annual Pew poll, only 14 percent of Republicans cited climate change as a top policy priority. That’s down from 23 percent in 2007, the first year Pew included climate change in its priority list. The party has clearly changed in those seven years, and Rubio knows where his voting base for 2016 is on the issue.

This is not simply a problem in the Republican Party, though. The American public routinely ranks addressing climate change low on its list of priorities for Washington. This year it ranked 19th among 20 issues tested by Pew, just behind “dealing with moral breakdown” and “improving roads, bridges, public transit.”

The climate issue is politically challenging not only because it’s at the bottom of people’s priority lists, but also because of overreach on both sides of the debate. Humans aren’t the sole “cause” of climate change, and environmentalists have done a disservice in making that claim too assertively. Our activities are exacerbating natural phenomena, making us part of the problem, but the Earth and its climate has been changing since it was formed. Because of human activity, things *are* changing faster than nature or humans can

adapt, and the sooner we start taking steps to slow things, the better off we will be.

The modern environmental movement arguably began with Teddy Roosevelt, the Republican president who established the national park system. A Republican president, Richard Nixon, and a Democratic Congress created much of our landmark environmental legislation, including the Clean Air Act and the establishment of the Environmental Protection Agency. But Republicans have gotten away from those values in recent years. The only way to return the GOP to its roots and, in turn, make headway on climate change is by ensuring that Republicans—and all Americans—recognize the very real economic costs of not protecting our environment.

Scientists have long predicted that one of the consequences of climate change will be more frequent and more severe storms. They can't predict where and when they will occur, but the extreme magnitude of them reflects climate change. We saw the destruction wrought by Hurricane Sandy in 2012, and I do not want anyone to have to endure what citizens of the New Jersey and New York coastlines experienced in that storm. Taking just my home state as an example, New Jersey's 127 miles of sandy beaches contribute approximately \$20 billion in economic activity to New Jersey's economy. More frequent and more severe storms means more homes and businesses destroyed, state economies blighted and of course, most importantly, more lives lost. We simply cannot afford to let that happen.

And the climate's not the only thing at stake here. Recent studies linking various health and economic impacts of environmental contamination should be enough to give any policymaker pause: the connection between certain pesticides and Parkinson's, the correlation between elevated lead in gasoline with crime rates and the finding that pregnant women who were exposed to high levels of diesel particulates were twice as likely to have an autistic child. In our necessary mission to grow the economy, we cannot neglect environmental stewardship; the price we pay is much greater than we can afford, both in terms of dollars and human lives.

This is no zero-sum game. In fact, the more our economy grows, the better we ought to be able to protect the planet—and ourselves. Recently economists have hypothesized what is called the “environmental Kuznets curve,” which shows that after a certain point in a country's development, GDP continues to grow even as the level of environmental pollutants decreases. To use just one example, between 1970 and 2006, U.S. GDP grew by 195 percent, yet thanks to regulatory changes annual emissions of carbon monoxide, nitrogen oxide, sulfur dioxide, and lead all decreased significantly.

I remain confident that economic prosperity and environmental protection are not mutually exclusive goals, and as soon as my party recognizes the exorbitant economic costs of *not* acting on climate change, I believe we will start to make progress. It is imperative that Congress make this issue a priority. I only hope it's not already too late.

*Christine Todd Whitman, former governor of New Jersey and administrator of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, is president of the Whitman Strategy Group.*

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