

## U.S. Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works

Senator Barbara Boxer  
“Newsmaker” Speech on Global Warming  
National Press Club  
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### *Remarks as prepared for delivery*

I wanted to speak with you today about combating global warming, because the warming of our earth is more than an inconvenient truth; it is the challenge of our generation.

It is a challenge we should meet with hope not fear, and a challenge that will make us stronger as a nation and as a people if we meet it head-on.

The leading scientists of the world tell us clearly that global warming is happening now and human activities are the cause.

Now, Senators are not climate scientists. But we are policy makers.

Just as our nation took action based on scientific consensus before, we must take action now. Today, I will outline some of the steps we can take – starting immediately – to confront the problem.

In the past, our nation has swiftly responded to scientific consensus, and solved major problems.

For example, in 1952 a polio epidemic in the U.S. peaked with 58,000 cases. Scientists determined that a massive immunization campaign was needed. By 1964, we had only 121 cases of polio—more than a 99 percent reduction. We didn’t walk away from the challenge.

When scientists told us that the reason the Cuyahoga River caught fire in Ohio in 1969 was because toxic pollution was accumulating there, we didn’t walk away from the challenge: we passed the Clean Water Act.

When scientists told us why the air had become so polluted we could see it and were choking on it, we didn’t walk away from the challenge; we passed the Clean Air Act in 1970.

When scientists told us that contaminated tap water was causing widespread waterborne disease and exposing people to cancer, we didn't walk away from the challenge: we passed the Safe Drinking Water Act in 1974.

There are many other examples...the Superfund program, the Brownfields program, the Endangered Species Act. In none of these cases have we walked away from the challenge and in every one of these cases, we are the better for it.

Our generation faces a choice. Will we, in the stirring words of the 2004 Nobel Peace Prize laureate, give our children "a world of beauty and wonder?"

And I ask: Will we leave them lush forests teeming with wildlife, and fresh air and clear streams? Will our grandchildren know the thrill of holding their child's hand watching with excitement a towering snow-capped mountain or awesome, calving glaciers? Will they be lucky enough to catch a glimpse of a polar bear diving from ice floes into a bone chilling sea? Will they have plentiful food and ample water, and be able to wiggle their toes in the same beach sand their grandparents played in? Will our generation leave them a climate that supports the awe inspiring diversity of Creation?

I have a vision for my eleven year old grandson and for my new grandson who is expected in a few weeks.

My vision is that these children and yours will grow up and be able to know the gifts of nature that we saved for them. That they will understand we made the right choice for them...we protected the planet that is their home.

That because of our action they will not be shackled into fighting wars over the last drops of water or oil or remaining acres of arable cropland. They will not have to spend their last treasure building higher flood walls, bigger levees, and fortified cities to escape rising seas and angrier hurricanes.

Their cars will run on clean renewable fuels that do not pollute the air they breathe. The United States will lead in exporting clean technologies and products that are the engine of a new green economy. We will lead the world in showing the way to live well, in a way that respects the earth.

To make this vision a reality, we must face our challenge in a way that overcomes our differences, and that defies our party affiliations.

What struck me about the Kerry/Gingrich debate is that they both had great ideas. Capping and trading greenhouse gases, tax incentives and research all make sense. The most important thing about that debate is that they both agreed that global warming is urgent and action must be taken now.

Nearly four decades ago, the founder of Earth Day, U.S. Senator Gaylord Nelson of Wisconsin, had grown frustrated with the lack of action in Washington to save the earth. He wrote: "Evidence of environmental degradation was appearing everywhere and everyone noticed except the political establishment."

The political establishment is awakening to this challenge of global warming, but there needs to be a strong, steady, insistent alarm, not a soft, soothing wake up call. We are running out of time...scientists tell us we have about ten years, or the effects of our global warming emissions may become irreversible.

Many have pointed to India and China and suggested that we should wait for them before we act. I say the United States needs to be the world leader. When have we ever waited for other countries to lead?

If the United States leads, other nations like India and China will follow.

I asked President Bush to convene a summit of the top 12 emitting nations to discuss global warming. And today I asked him again to do so.

From Al Gore who put this issue on the nation's agenda, to Colin Powell who said "we can no longer deny that global warming is a problem facing our children and grandchildren," to 11 National Academies of Sciences, to hundreds of the world's leading scientists.

This issue is bigger than any person, any party.

We all must join together to solve it. As Thomas Friedman wrote on Sunday in the New York Times, "green is geo-strategic, geo-economic, capitalistic and patriotic."

California has moved with the leadership of our Democratic legislature and our Republican Governor. Other states have done it with Democrats and Republicans working side-by-side to develop programs to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Many in the business community are also stepping up. The U.S. Climate Action Partnership has come together to call for a mandatory greenhouse gas "cap-and-trade" program. This group includes business giants like Alcoa, BP, Caterpillar, Dupont, and GE, Lehman Brothers; electric utilities including PG&E in California, PNM in New Mexico, and Florida Power and Light; and leading environmental groups.

Business leaders see a promising future for America as we move our economy away from the old, often inefficient and polluting ways of doing business, and toward global-warming friendly technologies.

Religious leaders are also joining the fight against global warming. Groups as diverse as the Catholic Church, the Evangelical Climate Initiative, the Coalition on the Environment and Jewish Life, the Evangelical Environmental Network, and the National

Religious Partnership for the Environment, are rolling up their sleeves in interfaith groups. They are fighting for what many call “Creation Care,” the protection of the gifts we have inherited from our Creator.

And recently, key leaders of our national security community, who some people are calling “Green Hawks,” have been strongly urging us to wean ourselves from oil, and are urging us to combat global warming as well.

A study released this week by a group of retired high-ranking generals and admirals commissioned by the government-funded Center for Naval Analysis, warns us that we may face very real national security risks and global political instability from floods, disease, conflicts over water and food, and mass migrations that could be caused by unbridled global warming.

The federal government is late to this issue and it’s time to show up. That’s what the committee that I Chair -- the Environment and Public Works Committee, or EPW -- has done this year. We showed up with an “open mike,” where a third of the Senate expressed their views on global warming.

Then we invited scientists and wildlife experts, business and environmental leaders, and state and local leaders. We heard from New Jersey governor Jon Corzine -- who is in all of our thoughts and prayers today -- as well as California and Washington State leaders who have already acted.

We have held members briefings twice with the leading scientists in the world, from the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, or IPCC. Recently, these scientific experts told us that as many as 20 to 30 percent of the species on earth may be at risk of extinction from global warming, a deeply distressing thought.

And of course, we had a very important hearing where former Vice President Al Gore made a compelling case for us to act on global warming.

At the end of March, I was joined by Senator Inhofe, the Bush Administration, and the entire Committee in passing legislation that will require up to 8,000 buildings owned or leased by the federal government to install state of the art, energy efficient lighting and other technologies to slash their energy use by 20 percent within 5 years. We also set up a grant program to help local governments make their buildings more energy efficient. These actions will substantially cut global warming emissions caused by these buildings.

We are also leading the way by example. Just this week, we started installing new lighting technologies in our Committee’s offices, which will cut our electricity use for lighting by about 50 percent, and reduce our carbon footprint.

Now our Committee's plans are as follows. We will hear from members of the Religious community and more business leaders from the recreational industry, and EPA and former EPA officials. We will mark up green buildings legislation. Whenever I have the votes, I will report strong global warming bills to the Senate floor.

I know we all want to move forward on global warming as soon as possible. Every day we move closer to that reality. I have been informed by Senators Carper, Alexander and Sanders, who are all members of my Committee, that they will soon introduce bills to cap pollution from powerplants, including global warming pollution. Powerplants are a big part of the problem and can also pose a huge threat to public health.

Of course, Senator Sanders and I and Senator Lieberman have introduced economy-wide bills. So these bills represent real progress in our Committee, on a bipartisan basis.

In a real breakthrough, the Supreme Court has weighed in on the side of the environment and our people. They say that right now, without one more law, EPA can begin to regulate greenhouse gas emissions under the Clean Air Act. What does this mean?

It means that right now, EPA can and should let California and other states go forward with global warming pollution standards for cars. That's a 30 percent reduction from cars in California.

It means that EPA can and should set strong nationwide global warming standards for cars as well, meeting California's standards. That would mean at least a 30 percent reduction from cars, which are about a third of our emissions.

It means that EPA can and should require strong global warming pollution limits for new and upgraded coal-burning power plants immediately. That way, we won't be saddled for the next half-century with vast quantities of global warming pollution from coal-fired power plants that don't use the latest clean technologies. Powerplants are a large share of the problem, and EPA can act now to reduce their emissions dramatically.

When EPA Administrator Steve Johnson comes before my committee on April 24<sup>th</sup>, I will challenge him to use the power EPA has had all along to address global warming, and has refused to use. The Supreme Court has left this Administration with no excuses for further delay.

I also look forward to hearing from Carol Browner and William Reilly, former EPA Administrators at that same hearing. Both urged the Supreme Court to hold that EPA already has the authority to control global warming. Again, without one new piece of legislation, the EPA can act on many fronts.

We know that roughly 30 percent of greenhouse gas emissions in America comes from transportation, 40 percent from power plants, and 30 percent from industry, residential, and commercial emissions. Therefore the path for us is clear.

We know what we have to do. We must reduce carbon emissions enough so that we can stabilize greenhouse gases in the atmosphere at 450 parts per million (ppm) to hold temperatures rises to less than 2° Fahrenheit from today's levels.

In order to achieve this goal, we need to cap and eventually, reduce our greenhouse gas emissions by at least 80 percent below 1990 levels by 2050. This will require action by all sectors of our economy. First, we must become far more energy efficient. This saves money, makes us more competitive, and reduces pollution and greenhouse gas emissions.

Power plants must look to renewable energy sources like wind and solar power, or capture and sequester their global warming emissions.

Cars, trucks, and other modes of transportation must move towards green, renewable fuels such as environmentally clean biofuels, or electricity.

Our industries and buildings must become state of the art energy savers.

Again, stepping up to this challenge in the right way will transform and invigorate our country, not devastate it.

I have a vision of a nation driven by innovation, energy efficiency, and green technology exported around the world. I see a strong American economic base, with entrepreneurs and businesses thriving...a people united by a challenge in their daily lives and as a society. And in the process, I believe we will find a common purpose.

Failure to act would result in a huge economic cost. According to Sir Nicholas Stern, one dollar spent now will save five dollars later in avoided costs. Individuals can help too.

To help provide information for individuals who want to make a difference, I want to call your attention to our new "carbon footprint" website... Here's how it works: log onto our Environment and Public Works Committee website at [epw.senate.gov](http://epw.senate.gov), and go through a short questionnaire. You will find out how much global warming pollution you are responsible for, and can learn about ways to reduce your "carbon footprint."

There is so much interest from our people on this. The polls show they want to act now.

Just this morning, a poll on behalf of the Center for American Progress, was released on what Americans think about global warming. Americans believe that the

second most important domestic priority is to “reduce dependence on oil and coal to stop global warming.”

Fully three-quarters of Americans say global warming effects are apparent now. By nearly 3 to 1, the public wants to “move quickly to expand the production of clean, alternative energy and reduce our use of oil and coal.”

Here is what I want to leave you with.

Each of us grows up in our own way and in our own time. But at its center, growing up means being responsible, being accountable and planning for the future.

We in the Senate, right now must muster the maturity and wisdom to rise to the challenge of addressing global warming. We need to be responsible, accountable and plan for the future of our planet.

When we were children, our home was our entire world. That home met all our needs. As we grew older our home expanded to include our community, our city, our state, our nation and the world.

Now we must take it a step further. If we don’t expand the limits of our vision to include planet earth as our home, then we may lose our home as we know it.

I will do everything I can as a citizen of this great country and as the Chairman of a great committee that has always led the way on the environment.

Just as we lift our children up to feed them, to comfort them and to protect them from any manner of harm; just as we would never leave them trapped in a locked car in the hot sun; we must protect them from global warming.

As the ancient religious writings say:

See to it that you do not destroy my world,  
for there is no one to repair it after you.  
*[Midrash Ecclesiastes Rabbah 7:13]*

Today, for us it should be simple.

Working together we can reverse global warming.

We must lead on this not follow.

It’s our job.

I truly believe when we do our job, our country and our families will be better and stronger and the world safer.

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