

Testimony of Senator John Warner (Retired)
Senate Environment and Public Works Committee
October 28, 2009

Madam Chairman, Senator Inhofe, members of the Committee, thank you for inviting me to testify here today on the critical issue of climate change. It is always a pleasure to appear before my former colleagues, and I do so within the post-employment restrictions that guide retired senators and allow them to be invited to provide testimony.

As you all know, in my retirement, I continue to work on an issue of great importance to me: the linkage between global climate change, greater energy independence, and national security. Over my thirty years in the U.S. Senate working with military men and women and their families, I left convinced that, if left unchecked, global warming could increase instability and lead to conflict in already fragile regions of the world. We are talking about energy insecurity, water and food shortages, and climate driven social instability. We ignore these threats at the peril of our national security and at great risk to those in uniform who must operate, on orders of our President, the sea lifts, the air lifts, and other missions to alleviate humanitarian suffering or sovereign instability in remote regions of the world.

I am pleased and honored to be part of several projects of the Pew Charitable Trusts, including the Pew Project on National Security, Energy and Climate and the Pew Center on Global Climate Change. I

also work with a number of other very professional NGOs on this topic, including CNA's Military Advisory Board, the American Security Project, the Partnership for a Secure America, Center for Strategic and International Studies, and the Truman National Security Project.

The Pew Project brings together science and military experts to examine new strategies for combating climate change, protecting our national security, increasing our energy independence and preserving our nation's natural resources.

We recognized the need to take this message of the mutually-reinforcing goals of energy security, national security and climate security outside the beltway. We send teams out of Washington to different states, where we talk, but we also listen and learn from the public.

I have led these teams around this great nation, often joined by retired military officers, such as Vice Admiral Dennis McGinn of the Center for Naval Analysis. We have been working with state and municipal governments, colleges and universities, local organizations, and other local military, security and climate experts who join in our panel discussions with the public.

To date, we have visited Missouri, South Carolina, Florida, Michigan, Indiana, Virginia, Colorado, and Montana. In each of these states, teaming up with a member of CNA's Military Advisory Board, a local voice, and often members of academia, we have held a forum, open to

the public to discuss this critical link between our national security, our energy security and climate change.

I had the distinct pleasure, on our last trip, of spending several hours at the U.S. Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs. Here I met not only with faculty, but with our nation's best and brightest future military leaders. And these young leaders get it. They understand the critical link, and their role in protecting this nation from the risks posed by changing global climate, including energy shortages, food and water shortages, and the future missions these young men and women will serve on to help.

In fact, the USAF Academy has established a most impressive framework of academic studies on this issue, as well as internal campus policies driven toward securing "energy independence" on the Academy grounds. By 2015, the Academy expects to produce all its own energy and hopes to serve as an example of how a vast infrastructure of buildings can not only save, but also produce, its own energy.

Numerous expert reports have documented the security challenges that global climate change could worsen. The Central Intelligence Agency's long-term forecasting arm, the National Intelligence Council, recently reported that global warming could directly impact the U.S. by threatening energy supplies, damaging military bases, increasing food and water shortages and stressing the economy.

In Congressional testimony earlier this year, director of National Intelligence Dennis Blair said “the Intelligence Community judges global climate change will have important and extensive implications for U.S. national security interests over the next 20 years.”

In fact, recently, the CIA launched its Center on Climate Change and National Security. Last week I visited the Center and was most impressed. The Center is a small unit led by senior specialists from both the Directorate of Intelligence and the Directorate of Science and Technology. The new Center will bring together expertise on an important national security topic—how environmental factors can impact political, economic, and social stability overseas and, how such instability will affect our own national security.

The focus of this Center is not the science of climate change, but the national security impact of phenomena such as prolonged droughts, rising sea levels, increased temperatures, population shifts, and heightened pressures and competition for scarce natural resources. The Center will provide critical information and support to both the public and private sector.

In 2007, as a member of the Senate Armed Services Committee, together with then-Senator Hilary Clinton, we added to the fiscal year 2008 National Defense Authorization Act language requiring the Department of Defense to consider the effects of climate change on DoD facilities, capabilities, and missions.

As a result, DoD is leading the way in becoming more efficient and effective in their use of energy and working to reduce their carbon boot print.

This provision of law requires future periodic revisions of long-range Department of Defense strategic plans to take account of the impact on U.S. interests of global climate change and vulnerable energy sources. I am so pleased to be joined on this panel by DoD Deputy Undersecretary for Strategy, Plans and Forces, Kathleen Hicks, who will advise the committee on the strong initiatives the Department is taking to implement the law.

Finally, I have observed that many American's see climate change as a threat to continuing their family traditions and they want Congress to act to preserve them. Last week I had the distinct pleasure of joining 13,000 hunters and anglers nationwide on a telephone conference to discuss their very real concerns about climate change. These are men and women who frankly love the land. These sportsmen and women practice traditions shared from generation to generation, and they are concerned about the impact climate change will have on the traditions they hold dear. I would ask this committee to make sure they receive a fair portion of the allocation system to address the natural resource adaptation needs of this great nation.

If the U.S. does not get in front now, we risk ceding the technology ground to China and other nations that are investing in renewable energy, investing in research and development at a much faster pace than we are. We have a chance to not only reduce CO2 emissions, but to help move our economy in the right direction and to create new industries and jobs here at home. We can help revitalize our manufacturing base, but not if we end up having to buy what I call the “black box” that represents the “silver bullet” technology from China. If that is not a reason to act now, I do not know what is.

Madam Chairman and members of the committee, I commend you for your efforts and continued leadership. As we say in the Marines, your bill has established a beachhead. Now is the time for Congress to move forward and provide a legislative framework that clearly establishes a role for the U.S. as a leader.

We need this Committee to take action because climate change threatens what Americans value: our young men and women who defend this country, our traditions, and economy. We must take the opportunity to reshape our failed energy system and create new jobs for our families.

To end, I would just like to thank the committee for having me here today and wish you luck as you move forward in the legislative process.