

Comments of James E. Hansen on 14 November 2007 Presentations to the Interim Joint Committee on Agriculture and Natural Resources

For the sake of identification, I am director of the NASA Goddard Institute for Space Studies in New York, Adjunct Professor of Earth and Environmental Sciences at Columbia University, and head one of the major units of the Columbia Earth Institute. I express my opinions here as a private citizen, based on my four decades of experience in research on the climate of the Earth and other planets. I am a member of the National Academy of Sciences, have advised the Vice President and his task force on energy and climate, and have received numerous awards for my research on climate change.

I comment here on the thrust of the presentations to be made today to the Interim Joint Committee by Mr. James Taylor and Viscount Christopher Monckton. The positions that they espouse with regard to global climate change fly in the face of extensive scientific knowledge that has accumulated in recent years as summarized in reports of the United States National Academy of Sciences, the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, and numerous other scientific bodies.

If such positions are taken seriously by Kentucky authorities it risks more than embarrassment. It risks delay in serious evaluation of the appropriate response to the problems and the opportunities posed by the threat of climate change.

Actions that are needed to minimize climate change are not only feasible, but they have many ancillary benefits in terms of cleaner air and water, improved public health, and preservation of the gift of creation that includes the remarkable array of life on our planet. Surely it is possible to find leadership that will give priority to the need for stewardship, for the sake of our children and grandchildren, as well as ourselves, above the short-term profits of special interests.

Presentations that deny the reality of global climate change and the increasing role of human-made emissions are out of touch with current scientific knowledge. However, within the scientific community there remains a range of opinions about the urgency and nature of appropriate actions for dealing with climate change.

My opinion, based on a plethora of data that has become available in recent years, is that we are close to passing thresholds that would guarantee major climate problems. I have summarized the scientific evidence in testimony regarding plans for construction of a new coal-fired power plant in my home state of Iowa. That scientific summary is available at http://www.columbia.edu/~jeh1/IowaCoal_071105.pdf. The information presented there is equally relevant to Kentucky.

James E. Hansen
4273 Durham Road
Kintnersville, PA 18930