



*Department of Social Development and World Peace*

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July 6, 2004

Dear Senator:

On behalf of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, we encourage the Senate to take up legislation addressing the challenges and effects of global climate change. We enclose a copy of U.S. Catholic Bishops' statement [\*Global Climate Change: A Plea for Dialogue, Prudence, and the Common Good\*](#). We hope that as the Senate takes up legislation it will use the occasion to adopt measures that will genuinely help to mitigate the effects of climate change.

We especially urge you to address the needs and concerns of the poor. Because of where they live and their limited resources, the poor will experience most directly the possible harmful affects of climate change, including possible escalating energy costs, work displacement and health problems. This is true here in the United States as well as abroad. Further research on the possible impact of climate change on the poor, and the need for programs to help the poor adapt and mitigate the worst affects should be a priority.

For too long, the debate about climate change has been polarized. The science surrounding climate change is often used more as a weapon than as a source of wisdom, insight or guidance. The motives of many are impugned. In this atmosphere, the search for the common good of the human family as well as the planet are neglected or lost. Too often, the voices of the poor and of the poor countries are muffled or ignored.

While there are many technical aspects that need to be considered in addressing global climate change, we recognize our moral responsibility of stewardship. Our actions and decisions, particularly those regarding our use of energy resources, have a profound affect not only today but also for future generations. While there may not be full scientific consensus or complete certainty as to the consequences of climate change, there seems to be sufficient scientific consensus that prudence would dictate taking preventive or mitigating action.

The United States bears a special responsibility to lead and help shape responses that serve not only its own interests but those of the entire human family. The adoption of even modest efforts could help send a signal that the time has come to move forward. Technological advancements and entrepreneurship are hallmarks of our society. Applying them innovatively could help usher in a more environmentally benign affect on global climate.

Thank you for your attention to our perspective and we offer the bishops' statement as a source of reflection and guidance.

Sincerely yours,

Theodore Cardinal McCarrick  
Archbishop of Washington  
Chairman, Committee on Domestic Policy

Most Reverend John H. Ricard, S.S.J.  
Bishop of Pensacola-Tallahassee  
Chairman, Committee on International Policy