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Climate Change Is a Congressional Issue

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International activity related to climate change has accelerated since President Bush signed the Framework Convention on Climate Change in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. This contrasts with the ebbs and flows of media attention and relative lack of public awareness in the United States. A new United Nations-sponsored climate change bureaucracy is now engaged in negotiations involving more than 160 nations. These negotiations are anticipated to be completed by late 1997 and could produce an agreement placing the United States at a significant economic and competitive disadvantage, while having no substantial effect on limiting the risk of climate change.

Congressional oversight is critical to ensure that the Administration vigorously holds the line against any premature and precipitous climate change agreements that threaten U.S. economic and competitive interests.

The Berlin Mandate Process

The latest round of international climate change negotiations, known as the Berlin Mandate Process, began in August 1995. These negotiations are expected to strengthen the Climate Change Convention by adding new policies and measures -- including additional energy taxes and caps on national emissions -- to reduce greenhouse gas emissions after the year 2000. The Berlin Mandate Process could take fewer than 18 months to complete, so time is of the essence. Moreover, many of the principles incorporated into the negotiating process would skew the outcome against U.S. economic interests.

- **Developing Nations Are Exempted:** The climate change issue is global and can be addressed only on a broad international basis. The Clinton Administration continuously has stressed a global perspective. U.S. climate negotiators, however, agreed to the Berlin mandate language that exempts all developing nations, including the most advanced nations such as South Korea and Singapore, and nations such as China and India that will be the largest individual sources of emissions in the future. "Exempted" countries are invited to the negotiating table, where they will be able to protect their exemption and help determine how much more should be done by developed nations, such as the United States, to reduce their emissions well into the next century. Ironically, the "exempted" countries, as a group, will produce the majority of greenhouse emissions in future years.
- **Targets and Timetable Approach Hurts the United States:** Serious proposals being considered in the Berlin mandate negotiations would require legally binding targets and timetables to reduce carbon dioxide emissions 15-20 percent below 1990 levels by 2005 or 2010. If ratified, mandatory targets and timetables would drop U.S. Gross Domestic Product 2-3 percent (about \$140-\$200 billion in today's economy) and cost

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600,000 jobs annually, according to DRI/McGraw Hill estimates. Moreover, targets and timetables would impose a disproportionate economic burden on the U.S. economy, due largely to the combined effect of continued economic growth and future population increases. Countries supporting target and timetable proposals do not face these combined factors.

What Congress Can Do

The Administration must be held accountable in the Berlin Mandate Process for ensuring that any agreement: (1) includes appropriate commitments from all nations involved in the negotiations, and (2) keeps the United States on an even footing with our trading partners, as President Clinton assured last year. This can be achieved if Congress --

- holds major oversight hearings before the ministerial-level climate change negotiations scheduled for July 1996. This second meeting of the Conference of the Parties (countries that have ratified the Climate Convention) will address scientific and economic analyses and assessment activities and U.S. policies and positions on the new commitments being negotiated;
- evaluates information contained in the wide range of economic studies that have been conducted to date, and seeks information regarding economic studies now being conducted by the Administration;
- requires the U.S. position in Berlin mandate negotiations to be based on full participation of appropriate federal agencies with expertise in economic, trade and employment policies;
- requires that the United States analyze and assess the job, trade and competitive impacts of specific policies, measures and timetables proposed;
- requires that the secretary of state certify to Congress that any protocol, amendment or other legal instrument resulting from the climate negotiations and submitted to the Senate for ratification (1) was developed in a transparent manner and analyzed for economic and environmental impacts; (2) ensures that the cost of implementation will not adversely affect the industrial competitiveness of the United States, and (3) states that implementation will be achieved by the United States without the need for new regulatory requirements, standards, taxes or fees;
- requires that U.S. negotiators discuss policy decisions with and seek the advice and counsel of non-government organizations, including U.S. business, labor and the environmental community; and
- considers a bipartisan resolution or legislation expressing these views.

For more information on the Berlin Mandate Process, possible legislation or other issues related to the science and economics of climate change, please contact the Global Climate Coalition at (202) 637-3158.

Talking points for GCC talking points (Straw-Man) paper

Audience: Friendly Repub. and Dem. staff aware of climate change issue but not briefed on AGBM process

Mission: Establish predicate that climate change is a congressional issue. Believe we need to

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do this before we can pursue a legislative strategy.

Objective: Create a straw man to focus thinking and discussion.

Key Issue: When do we go to the Hill? Still need a hook Maybe upcoming AGBM meeting will provide it

Summarize paper

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