

1. POLICY POSITION

GLOBAL CLIMATE CHANGE

BACKGROUND

In 1992, the United States became a signatory to the United Nations Framework Conventions on Global Climate Change ("FCCC"). Subsequently, the Kyoto Protocol, intended to expand the scope of the FCCC, was negotiated in December 1997.

Under the Kyoto Protocol, the United States would potentially be required to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases to 7 percent below 1990 levels during the period 2008 to 2012, with potentially larger emission reductions thereafter. Other major industrial nations would be required to reduce emissions to 6 percent to 8 percent below 1990 levels during the period 2008 to 2012, with potentially larger emission reductions thereafter. The Kyoto Protocol, as negotiated in December 1997, does not include binding greenhouse gas emission reduction targets for developing nations, including such high growth countries as China, India, Mexico, and South Korea.

In July 1997, the United States Senate adopted Senate Resolution No. 98 by a vote of 95 to 0, expressing the sense of the Senate that the United States should not be a signatory to any protocol to, or other agreement regarding, the U. N. Framework Convention on Climate Change which would (1) mandate new commitments to limit or reduce greenhouse gas emissions for the Developed Country Parties, unless the Protocol or other agreement also mandated new specific scheduled commitments to limit or reduce greenhouse gas emissions for developing countries within the same compliance period, and (2) would result in serious harm to the economy of the United States.

Manmade emissions of greenhouse gases such as carbon dioxide are caused primarily by the combustion of oil, coal, and natural gas fuels by industries, automobiles, homes, and other users of energy. The United States relies on such carbon-based fossil fuels for more than 90 percent of its total energy supply. In order to achieve the emission reductions proposed by the Kyoto Protocol, the United States would have to reduce its carbon emissions by more than 30 percent during the period 2008 to 2012. According to a study prepared by the U. S. government, a reduction of this magnitude would result in the loss of more than 900,000 U. S. jobs, sharply increased energy prices, reduced family incomes and wages, and severe losses of output energy in energy intensive industries such as aluminum, steel, rubber, chemicals, and utilities.

Developing countries exempt from emission limitations under the Kyoto Protocol are expected to increase their rates of fossil fuel use over the next two decades, and to surpass the United States and other industrialized countries in total emissions of greenhouse gases. This increase in emissions from developing countries would offset any environmental benefits associated with emissions reductions achieved by the United States and by other industrialized nations.

RECOMMENDATION

The Southern Legislative Conference of The Council of State Governments urges the president of the United States not to sign the Kyoto Protocol, nor attempt to implement the Protocol through regulatory or other measures, since the Protocol is inconsistent with U. S. Senate Resolution No. 98 by failing to include specific scheduled commitments for developing countries to mitigate greenhouse gas emissions within the same compliance period or periods as required for developed countries and would result in job loss and serious economic harm to the United States.

Furthermore, in the event the president signs the Kyoto Protocol, it should immediately be submitted to the Senate for ratification.

Furthermore, the U. S. Senate should reject any other proposed protocol or other amendment to the FCCC that is consistent with this resolution, or that does not comply with the U. S. Senate Resolution No. 98.

Furthermore, the Administration should develop and release a detailed explanation of any legislation or regulatory actions that may be required to implement the Protocol or other agreement and should also develop and release an analysis of the detailed financial costs and other impacts on the economy of the United States which would be incurred by the implementation of the Protocol.

Finally, the members of the Southern Legislative Conference request that this policy position be dispatched to the president of the United States, the vice president of the United States, the secretary of the senate, and appropriate members of Congress and congressional committees, including the Southern Legislative Conference delegations.