

**Oral Statement of
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Executive Office of the President of the United States,
before
The Select Committee on Energy Independence and Global Warming
U.S. House of Representatives
on
The Administration's View of the State of the Climate
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Chairman Markey, Ranking Member Sensenbrenner, Members of the Committee: I thank you for inviting me to testify today at this important and timely hearing. I had planned in this oral testimony to summarize my written statement about current and projected impacts of climate change and climate-science research activities, needs, and products. In light of the emphasis on the climate-science e-mail episode in the opening comments of many of the members, however, I would like instead to offer some observations on that situation and then go directly to my concluding remarks.

The e-mails are mainly about a controversy over a particular data set and the ways a particular, small group of scientists have interpreted and presented it. These kinds of controversies – and even accusations of bias and improper manipulation – are not all that uncommon in science...all branches of science.

The strength of science is that these kinds of controversies get sorted out over time, as to who is wrong and who is right and how much it matters, by the process of peer review and continued critical scrutiny by the knowledgeable community of scientists. Of course openness in sharing of data and methods is very important to this process, and as you know this administration is a strong proponent of openness in science and in government.

In this particular case, the data set in question and the way it was interpreted and presented by these particular scientists constitute only a very small part of the immense body of data and analysis on which our understanding of the issue of climate change rests.

The question being addressed was: have there been natural periods of warming in the past one or two thousand years that have been stronger than the warming episode now being experienced? That's an interesting question, and because of the controversy around it reflected in these e-mails, the National Academy of Sciences undertook a thorough review of all of the relevant data sets and methods of analysis (not just those used by these particular authors). The national academy's report on this was published in 2006, and concluded that the preponderance of available evidence points to the conclusion that the last 50 years have been the warmest half century in at least the last 2,000 years.

There is, and will remain after the dust settles in the current controversy, a very strong scientific consensus on the key characteristics of the problem: global climate is changing in a

highly unusual way compared to long experienced and expected natural variations; the unusual changes match what theory and models tell us would be expected to result from the very changes in the atmosphere that we know have been caused by human activities; significant impacts on human well-being from these changes in climate are already being experienced; and continuing with business-as-usual path in the fossil-fuel burning and tropical deforestation that are the largest contributor to these changes in the atmosphere is highly likely to lead to growth of the impacts to substantially unmanageable levels.

Turning now to the bottom line of my prepared testimony on the questions about climate science on which Dr. Lubchenco and I were asked to testify: We know a great deal about global climate change – what its causes are, how it works, what its impacts are and are likely to become – but there is more to learn; and the Federal government is doing a lot in support of the research needed to learn more, and the translation of that research into products our society can use to better cope with climate change, but we need to do more.

That said, I want to emphasize that in my judgment and that of the great majority of other scientists who have seriously studied this matter, the current state of knowledge about it (even though incomplete, as science always is) is sufficient to make clear that failure to act promptly to reduce global emissions to the atmosphere of carbon dioxide and other heat-trapping substances is overwhelmingly likely to lead to changes in climate too extreme and too damaging to be adequately addressed by any adaptation measures that can be foreseen.

The United States, as the largest contributor to the cumulative additions of anthropogenic greenhouse gases to the atmosphere since the beginning of the Industrial Revolution and still today the second-largest emitter after China, and as the world's largest economy and pre-eminent source of scientific and technological innovation, has the obligation and the opportunity to lead the world in demonstrating that the needed emissions reductions can be achieved in ways that are affordable and consistent with continued economic growth, that create new jobs, and that bring further co-benefits in the form of reduced oil-import dependence and improved air quality.

President Obama is going to Copenhagen to underline that his Administration is fully committed to assuming this leadership role. The Administration obviously will need the support of the Congress in delivering on this promise, and I'd like to thank you, Chairman Markey, and this Committee for your own leadership in this critically important matter. I thank you as well for your attention today.