



## Department of Social Development and World Peace

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WEBSITE: WWW.USCCB.ORG/SDWP

October 6, 2006

The Honorable John McCain  
Senate Russell Building  
Room #241  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Joseph Lieberman  
Senate Hart Building  
Room 706  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senators McCain and Lieberman:

On behalf of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, I thank you for asking to offer our perspective on the issue of global climate change. I commend your leadership in furthering a debate that seems to have been polarized by partisan politics.

The U.S. Catholic bishops believe creation is a gift from our Creator: the air we breathe, the water that sustains life and the fruits of the land that nourish us. While the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops has not taken a position on any specific piece of legislation, we are convinced that “At its core, global climate change is not about economic theory or political platforms, nor about partisan advantage or interest group pressures. It is about the future of God’s creation and the one human family.” (*Global Climate Change: A Plea for Dialogue, Prudence and the Common Good*, 2001).

The United States Congress will play a key role in determining how the United States responds to the challenge of global climate change. As you consider particular provisions to include in legislation to address this challenge, we especially urge you to make the plight of the vulnerable – poor people, displaced workers and people of developing countries – a central priority.

The principles that govern the views of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops related to global climate change are:

**Caring for the Poor and Issues of Equity.** Too often the voices of the poor in our land and in poor countries are missing or ignored. Because of where they live and their limited resources, poor people will experience most directly the possible harmful effects of climate change. Certainly, poor people in developing countries will bear the brunt of environmental distress, adjustments and destruction. Absent significant financial and technical assistance, the poor also lack the resources needed to alleviate these devastating impacts. In our own country,

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we should not place the burdens of adjustment on the backs of poor people, who have the fewest resources when responding to potential increases in energy costs and to climate changes. This would be unjust and unfair.

**Mitigating Potential Workforce Displacement.** There will be some industries that will bear more of a burden in adjusting to any changes in the energy sector. Targeted and responsive assistance to workers who may be displaced will be necessary. Any regulatory proposal to address climate change should include adequate and targeted resources to assist the poor here and abroad and workers in affected industries.

**Technological and Economic Assistance to Developing Countries.** Encouraging the development and use of clean energy technology will be particularly necessary to help developing countries meet the challenges of global climate change. To that end, the United States will need to not only provide leadership through its own example of increased energy efficiency and innovation, but also be willing to offer financial and technological assistance to help developing countries adopt less harmful and more efficient energy production. As the United States adopts meaningful climate change measures to mitigate and adapt to climate change, it will be easier to encourage full participation of other nations in a serious international system of emissions reductions. We also would support research to mitigate the effects of climate change and help us adapt to changes in climate, especially research focused on minimizing disease and premature death among the poor and most vulnerable, like children, the elderly, the sick and the disabled.

As you know, when you offered your climate legislation to the Senate in 2005, our Conference supported the provisions that addressed poverty and assistance for dislocated workers as well as further research on the impacts of climate on the poor. We are most pleased to see that these remain priorities in your current legislative proposal.

In particular, the Conference recommends that a significant portion of the funds raised from emissions permits be targeted to assist low-income populations both in this country and abroad and to provide transition assistance to dislocated workers and communities. While all seven priorities you are considering to include in legislation are worthy, the poor and dislocated workers deserve special priority. Climate change will most adversely affect the poor, no matter where they live. Abroad, we believe that climate change is really a development issue because the poor have a right to lift themselves out of poverty, but they must be able to do this in a way that will not worsen the climate problem. Here in the United States, unless adequate help is given to low-income families and dislocated workers, they will bear a disproportionate burden of the changes needed to address climate change.

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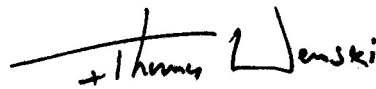
Our Conference also supports the development of clean energy technologies. If adequately designed to take into account appropriate technology for poorer countries, the legislative proposal could help the least developed countries address both poverty and climate change.

We would be happy to work with your staff to craft more specific language regarding assistance to low-income persons and communities and dislocated workers.

By advancing a constructive and long overdue dialogue on how our nation can help mitigate the adverse effects of climate change, particularly as they affect the poor and other vulnerable populations, your efforts and initiatives can serve our nation and move us toward necessary steps to better protect our natural and human environment from the potential risks of climate change.

Thank you for your leadership on this important priority. We welcome the offer seeking our perspectives concerning the important decisions on how best to address climate change.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Thomas Wenski". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal line extending to the left of the name.

Bishop Thomas G. Wenski  
Bishop of Orlando  
Chairman, Committee on International Policy