

Transcript of Webcast "The Heat is On: A National Town Meeting on Global Warming"

Featuring Sen. John McCain (R-AZ), Sen. Joseph Lieberman (D-CT), Environmental Defense President Fred Krupp, and Environmental Defense Climate Policy Specialist Melissa Carey.

Recorded June 17, 2004



>>FRED KRUPP

Welcome to *The Heat is On: A National Town Meeting on Global Warming*. I'm Fred Krupp President of Environmental Defense, and today we have thousands of people all across America and indeed around the world. Joining us right now for this special online event. Joining us today are two very special guests, Senator John McCain of Arizona, and Senator Joe Lieberman of Connecticut. They have become the leading champions in our nation's effort to tackle global climate change, with their historic, bipartisan McCain-Lieberman Climate Stewardship Act.

Environmental Defense has mobilized a massive national grass roots organizing and media campaign to support the Senators' efforts to pass this act. Our viewers can support the campaign by visiting our Global Warming undo it Web site at www.undoit.org, and you can submit your questions any time during this broadcast in the chat box on the lower left side of your screen. Senator McCain, Senator Lieberman, welcome and thanks for being with us here today.



>>SENATOR MCCAIN

Thank you.

>>SENATOR LIEBERMAN

Thank you.

>>FRED KRUPP

Senator McCain, why have you made global climate change such a priority?

>>SENATOR MCCAIN

Well Fred, over the years in the commerce committee, we have had hearings on climate change and we began this effort about 6 or 7 years ago, and each with each hearing we have seen more and more compelling evidence that climate is real, climate change has got to be addressed and there may come a point where it will be very difficult if not impossible to reverse some of the trends we are seeing in climate change.

>>FRED KRUPP

Thanks. Now I know the facts are very troubling to anyone who is taking the time to look at them I think. Senator Lieberman, as the Senate prepares to vote on your and Senator McCain's bill, the Climate Stewardship Act, I was wondering if you can tell us a little bit about the legislation and how it would work.

>>SENATOR LIEBERMAN

I would be glad to Fred, first thanks to EDF for all you have done to bring public awareness of the problem of global warming and of our bill up higher so I appreciate it. Look, this grew out of the fact that John McCain has described. This is not ideological, it's practical. There is a real problem and we have got to begin to take steps to solve it for the coming generations of Americans and people all over the world. John McCain and I and our staff have worked real hard for almost two years with the so-called stake holders, environmentalists, business people etc. etc., to come up with this proposal. It's moderate but it will get something done and the basic goal here is to get America to the level of greenhouse gas emissions we were at it in 2000 by the year 2010. And that means tamping down where we otherwise have been and we will continue to go and we will do it with a market based system. Basically you get an allowance of how much you can emit into the air of greenhouse gasses, it's lower than what you would otherwise emit, you have got to get there yourself or buy some offsets from others like forests or agricultural interests that consume carbon-dioxide, it's the kind of system that has worked to reduce the acid rain problem and it will put us back into the international effort to curb global warming.

>>FRED KRUPP

Thanks, that is a very lucid description, I was wondering why don't we go immediately and take some questions, they have been coming in from our audience. Remember if you are watching live from your computer you can submit your questions now in the chat box on the lower left side of your screen. Di Owen from San Raphael California has a question for Senator Lieberman. The question is, "I teach AP and environmental science to some very bright juniors and seniors in high school. They are universally disappointed in the progress made by our government on major issues such as global warming. What is something that you would recommend that they could do to help move this country forward and build support for the Climate Stewardship Act?"

>>SENATOR LIEBERMAN

That's a great question, the first thing I would say is don't lose the clear headedness of youth which sees that there are problems and that we are not doing anything about them. There was a great burst in the early decades of environmental movements in the '70s, and somewhat into the '80s when there were no party differences about how you felt about dealing with environmental problems and there still aren't party differences out among the people of this country where there is broad bipartisan support to do something about climate change. But unfortunately here in Washington there are some people who don't except the science and the facts and I think what your students could do is to write to your members of Congress, write to the White House, write to your Senators and talk the facts and plead to them to have a sense of responsibility to your generation, the young growing up are going to inherit either a better world because we have acted or a world that will face enormous changes, low lying areas actually being overcome by water, disease traveling to places it has not been, agriculture being badly affected. This is real stuff and ultimately it is the people demanding that their government do something that will get something to be done and over the special interest who don't want to change.

>>SENATOR MCCAIN

Fred let me make addition to that if I could, I would like to give two examples, one was that after 9/11, Joe and I proposed legislation to create a commission to find out what led up to 9/11 and what we need to do in order to prevent it again. That was opposed by leadership in both parties, vehemently opposed by the White House, that such a commission should be created. After about a year with public opinion and people getting involved and demanding to have an independent commission to study this whole scenario how America was attacked for the first time since the War of 1812, the commission was appointed. In the case of campaign finance reform we were able to bring the Senate to a halt until they agreed to consider and vote on campaign finance reform and that is because we had hundreds of thousands of people all over the country who were ready to shut down everybody's office so one of my practical recommendations to you is to get on the Internet so that we can contact you on this issue from time to time when we need you to contact your elected representatives. There is nothing like a flood of phone calls or a flood of E-mails to get the attention of an elected official particularly in even-numbered years.

>>SENATOR LIEBERMAN

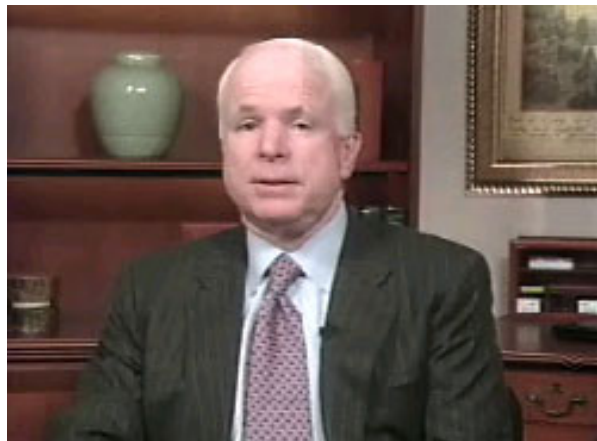
Those are great examples of turning around something that people said couldn't be done and also of how to get ready to do it again to deal with global warming.

>>FRED KRUPP

Well I couldn't agree more. We have a related question that has come in from Pat Raymond from Island Lake, Illinois for Senator McCain: "Why do the oil companies, the auto companies and other special interests have such a stranglehold on Congress that passing laws like the Climate Stewardship Act seems impossible despite all of your work on campaign finance reform?"

>>SENATOR MCCAIN

Well first of all, let me say to you it's not a matter of *whether*, it a matter of *when* we pass legislation addressing this issue. I mean the evidence continues to accumulate and unfortunately my question as I said earlier, whether it will be too late or not, because every day that goes by, greater damage is done to our environment. I believe that it is a simple answer: money. Money, campaign contributions by the major interests around here is really phenomenal. The pharmaceutical companies who basically wrote the Medicare prescription bill where there was tens of millions of dollars of campaign contributions associated with it. So we are fighting the money machine, but we will beat them.



>>FRED KRUPP

Kenneth Dubacker from Denver, Colorado asked Senator Lieberman, "As all Americas can see our dependence on foreign energy supplies is not only an environmental threat but also a threat to national security, would you back a Manhattan [Project]-style national effort to promote national energy independence?"

>>SENATOR LIEBERMAN

I absolutely would and you are so right, what we are talking about here in the Climate Stewardship Act is going to be good for the environment. But the kind of market based system we are setting up will create tremendous financial incentives for fuel efficiency and alternative clean energy and that will help us break our dependence on foreign oil which - no matter how strong we are militarily - makes us weak as we see right now in our continuing dependence on countries in the Middle East for oil. Countries that we cannot count on. Let me put it that way so I cannot, it's been a great failure of leadership, one of the most consequential over the last couple of decades, when we have known that problem of energy dependence was there. We have known it was affecting our national security and we have not done anything about it and the Manhattan Project is a great metaphor because we had a crisis, we threw ourselves into it. We did something people didn't think could be done, and it brought an end to the Second World War, and improved our security, and that's exactly what our energy independence would do for us today.

>>FRED KRUPP

A question has come in from Santiago, California from Betsy A. for Senator McCain. "The science in the recent blockbuster global warming movie "The Day after Tomorrow" was quite exaggerated, but how can we capitalize on the film to tell the truth about global warming?"

>>SENATOR MCCAIN

Well Betsy first of all in San Diego, I want you to send back Arizona's water! Second of all, I think movies like that are helpful, not because they are so accurate but they pique people's interest in the issue, and that's where I think it's helped. I think most intelligent Americans don't believe that cataclysmic events that were depicted in the movie are very likely, but it does pique people's interest and curiosity and hopefully they will get involved in this issue.

>>FRED KRUPP

Great. Linda Mahoney from Broomfield, Colorado has a question for Senator Lieberman: "Do you think the United States should assume a leadership role in the world community addressing the issue of global warming?"

>>SENATOR LIEBERMAN

Absolutely, and unfortunately the fact that we pulled out of Kyoto 3 years ago affected our leadership role in the world, not just with regard to the environment and global warming, but overall. The people around the world including, particularly in our closest allied countries in Europe, are deeply concerned about global warming. They know we're the number one emitter of greenhouse gases, and the fact that we're not going to be part of Kyoto really infuriated them, and frankly it's part of the reason why we've had such a time getting them to help us in other areas where we need their help such as in Iraq. So, I think the passage of the Climate Stewardship Act but only helps us here at home but would put us back in the world leadership and it'll be good for the environment and again rebuild alliances in a way that will be good for our security.

>>FRED KRUPP

Boy, I couldn't agree with you more, but it's my job to go to the next question which is from Deepak Vat from Fayetteville, Arkansas who has got a question for Senator McCain. "The issue of global warming has been around for many years, but many politicians dismiss global warming citing faulty science. How can we counter those arguments from those who deny the science behind global warming?"

>>SENATOR MCCAIN

Well one thing is to rely on reliable sources of information. The National Academy of Scientists is an unimpeachable group of scientists, and so the interesting thing about climate change is that a growing preponderance of scientific evidence and scientific experts agree on this issue. Scientists are the most cautious people in the world but they're coming out with very strong and very definitive statements. Second thing is, you know that old line about, 'Are you going to believe me or your lying eyes', is that there are visible signs at both poles and Greenland. There was a recent story in the Sunday *New York Times* about Greenland. There are obvious signs of serious climate changes taking place as I speak, and when Joe and I were forcing a vote last time I had a picture of Kilimanjaro. There's no snow left on Kilimanjaro. I had a picture of Glacier National Park. They're going to have to change the name - there are no more glaciers in Glacier National Park. So combined with the scientific evidence we've got to show the visual evidence of these effects and Joe's got a great story about the Inuit tribe in Alaska which I will not steal from him.

>>SENATOR LIEBERMAN

This is why we work so well. This is the old story about the canary in the coal mine and sending the warning. I mean the Inuits in the North, close to the Arctic, have seen robins over the last few years for the first time in their 10,000-year history. The Inuits, they don't have a word in their vocabulary for robins. Now that's because of the warming of the planet, and the effect it's had on them, so we have to, in that sense listen to that robin, and act before the consequences cover the globe including the United States of America.

>>FRED KRUPP

It really is a wake-up call. We have David Cromwell from Detel, New Mexico with a question for you, Senator Lieberman. "Given that automobiles are a large cause of global warming pollution in the United States, can't we demand legislation for lighter, more fuel efficient vehicles?"

>>SENATOR LIEBERMAN

We can and we should, and we've tried, but it's been stopped, and here again the special interests resisting change have put us in a position where our health and our well-being is going to be affected. So, a while ago they came out with the annual fuel efficiency numbers and they were at a 22-year low, so in other words we're using fuel less efficiently at a time, and because of our dependence on foreign oil, the impact of burning fuel on the environment we ought to be using it less. And there's only one way to do this. We got to demand it. We got to demand it in law. We've tried it, I made proposals, John has. We're going to keep trying it until it happens.



The interesting thing is that in some ways the market is speaking and Fred as I'm sure you know the major manufacturers of automobiles are now putting out the hybrid vehicles which get a lot more miles per gallon and most places you look there's a waiting list. People want to buy them. They want to be part of the solution because they're worried about the problem.

>>FRED KRUPP

Yea, it's as much as a six-month waiting list and many dealers are no longer even taking deposits so it's, they are in demand. They've just got to make them faster. Well, Pollyanna Harmon from Torrance, California writes in with a question for Senator McCain. "As a concerned citizen what can I do to help convince President Bush what a serious problem global warming is?"

>>SENATOR MCCAIN

It's sort of along lines of the same question we had a little while ago. Get involved, get active, get on the Internet. The Internet is going to change the world as much in its own way as climate change is. It's an instant means of communication. It's an instant means of mobilization, and it has profound consequences. I'm not sure they're all going to be good, but I advise all of our participants to make sure you're on the Internet so that we can communicate with you instantly. When Joe and I first got into politics we could send a letter out and it would take 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, days depending on the weather conditions with our U.S. mail service, and then someone would sit down and write us a letter back, and it would take 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 days for us to communicate with each other. Now we can do it instantly, and we should maximize that capability as we mobilize at certain points as we're in the struggle for full recognition and treatment of climate change.

>>FRED KRUPP

Okay, well here's a final question for both of you from Lisa Adotto from Portland, Oregon, and she's asking, what would it really take to get legislation passed that will limit global warming? How close are we in the Senate? Is it likely that the House will pass this type of legislation?

>>SENATOR MCCAIN

The House will not any time soon. The Senate I think relatively soon, we could probably get 51 votes; remembering that to get serious work done in the Senate you have to have 60 votes. All I can tell you is that Joe and I have both been experienced with other causes and other issues that people said 'You don't have a snowball's chance in Heelabend, Arizona' to get done. And we've been tenacious and we have worked hard, and we haven't quit, and we've had people on record, that's why these votes are important because we want people on record. You don't care what someone says, you care how they vote and we'll win eventually. I don't know if it's one year, two years, three years. Part of it is driven by the evidence of climate change which is steadily increasing, frankly more rapidly than I even ever thought it would. So, the key to it is don't give up, don't butterfly around to other issues, understand what your priorities are, mobilize people, and believe that the will of the people will prevail. The overwhelming majority of Americans when informed about climate change are as deeply concerned as all of us are if we were on this chat today.

>>FRED

Thanks. Joe?

>>SENATOR LIEBERMAN

John is as always right on target. I do want to point out that Heelabend, Arizona is a very hot place, so we're going to stay on this as long as it takes to get it done. The problem is not going to get better by itself. It's going to get worse, and the question is whether we can get enough people to join our march to push their elected representatives in Washington right up to the White House to support what we are doing. So, first time we brought it up last November on the floor of the Senate we got 43 votes, that was a lot more than anybody thought. The administration was working against us, the interest groups, energy, oil, were working against us. We got 43 votes. We are going to put it on a bill as soon as we can in this session as an amendment. I am confident we are going to get a few more votes but this is

urgent and I know that movie "The Day After Tomorrow" is over an exaggeration but believe me there are some truth to it not going to happen as quickly as it happened in the movie but if we don't do something soon we are going to see some disastrous climate changes in this world and the rest of the world is moving on this. The Russians have committed to ratify Kyoto I gather, by the end of the year so the rest of the world is going to be doing the responsible thing and we are going to be outlaws - we can't do that.

>>SENATOR MCCAIN

Could I also add my appreciation to the Environmental Defense Fund in general and you in particular Fred for helping us on this issue and your support has been critical and their other capabilities of bringing issues to the light of members of Congress besides the use of campaign contributions, and that is through mobilization of large numbers of citizens

>>FRED KRUPP

Thank you Senator. Is there anything you will like to add, Senator McCain or Senator Lieberman, before we wrap up this segment of our webcast?

>>SENATOR MCCAIN

Well I think that in interest of all disclosure you know this issue is backed by two losers so you keep that in mind.

>>SENATOR LIEBERMAN

We lost in the presidential campaigns but we got a pretty good record in the Congress and we are going to add this as another win. Fred, thank you for everything you have done and we are going to stick together until we get it done and when we are done we got a [] to say we protected you that is really what is all about.

>>FRED KRUPP

Senator McCain I know when the history books were written there are going to look at your picture and Senator Lieberman's picture and the word underneath is not going to be *losers*, it's going to be *winners* and *champions* so thank you for everything you are doing for us. Thank you both.

>>SENATOR MCCAIN

Thanks Fred.

>>SENATOR LIEBERMAN

Thanks Fred.

>>FRED KRUPP

I know the Senators have to get back to the Capitol now so I want to thank them very much for joining us, and now I want to turn to Melissa Carey. Melissa is a climate policy specialist working for Environment Defense and is one of the people most involved with working with the Senate and the public to get the Climate Stewardship Act passed. Welcome, Melissa.

>>MELISSA CAREY

Thanks Fred.

>>FRED KRUPP

We've just had a very strong case made by Senators Lieberman and McCain [on] why we need to deal with climate change, the advantages of doing so beyond even the environmental advantages, and how their bill will take the first moderate but essential steps. A very large part of their focus was on the need for the public to be heard to speak out in support of action

on climate. You've been helping to lead our efforts so why don't you take a minute and tell people what's going on now and how they might get more involved.

>>MELISSA CAREY

Sure, thanks Fred. As you know we as well as many others have been very active over the last year to get the Climate Stewardship Act passed. Here is what is going on. The bill was voted on across last October and we received a huge response, 43 votes for Climate Stewardship. In area of environmental protection and especially on the issue global warming which has been so polarized in the past, this vote count was a real earthquake. As you heard so well from the Senators McCain and Lieberman, what we are doing right now is taking that momentum and pressing forward with another vote to continue to built support for change. We are continuing the press the issue on Capitol Hill because global warming is a problem that we can and we must fix. I want to add that our efforts are not limited to the Hill. All over the country we are working hard to raise public awareness and build support for this historic initiative, and while I have the opportunity here, I wanted to take a moment to share an example of a broad public outreach. Here is a look at an ad that we are running in some of the keys states leading up to this vote.



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>>THE AD

(Music) [Narrator:] It's a threat to a forest, waters, wild life and the very America we are leaving for our children. It's global warming and it's happening now.



[McCain:] I have seen the effects of climate change around the world. Everywhere I go more and more people are concerned.

[Narrator:] But there is hope - we can help undo global warming. Within weeks, the Senate will vote on the McCain-Lieberman act to combat global warming. Tell your Senators you support this critical legislation -

sign the petition at www.undoit.org.

>>FRED KRUPP

Well, that's a great ad Melissa, and you know it reminds me to thank those watching because it's donations from many of you that have helped get that ad on the air in states where we very much need the Senators to be with us. Melissa, I am wondering if you can tell us a little bit more about specifically what people in our audience can do to help?

>>MELISSA CAREY

Sure, I think that the first thing I would encourage people to do anyone in our audience who hasn't done so is to go to www.undoit.org and become a citizen cosponsor by signing the emissions petition. That action alone shows direct support for the bill. And that support is communicated to your senators. We now have over 300,000 citizen cosponsors from around the country and that number is growing every day. Our goal is a million by the beginning of next year. The web site www.undoit.org will guide you through the process.

The second thing we need is specific communication directed at specific senators and let me explain what I mean. The last vote in October really, really helped us understand which senators were supportive, which we just completely opposed and then most importantly which senators that voted "NO" were open to learning more and ultimately switching to "YES" and there are those senators out there. As we understood more about each senator we began to focus our activities on those senators that we thought might be gettable, the ones that might

come over to our side as well as continuing to thank those who voted "YES" the first time. So on the screen now should be the list of those Senators that we're especially encouraging people to contact. If you live in one of these States, we would really encourage you to talk to your senators and let them know that you want them to support the bill. They do need to hear from you. We also encourage you to talk to your friends, your neighbors, and your family about doing the same thing. It's a critical time for the bill and every contact will help. I know folks don't always understand that but it is true. If you don't live in one of these key states but know someone who does, then we'd encourage you to be in contact with them for the same reasons. We need folks from Ohio, from Minnesota, from West Virginia, from Nebraska, from Kansas, from many other places to weigh in with their elected representatives; it really does make a difference. As the Senators made clear, at the end of the day these efforts will be successful if we get people involved, so I hope everyone watching and listening will do so now is really the time to take action.

>>FRED KRUPP

Thanks Melissa, thanks again to Senator McCain and Senator Lieberman and our live Internet audience for taking the time to join us today. We had thousands of people watching. We had more than one thousand questions submitted. I am sorry we didn't get a chance to get to each and every one. I also want to thank our partners who have supported our campaign. Six concerned companies have helped us build grassroots support for the Climate Stewardship Act including Stonyfield Farms, Clif Bar, Odwalla, Organic Valley, Silk and Trinity Springs, and you heard a vote on the McCain-Lieberman Climate Stewardship act is coming in the United States very soon. Once again, remember to visit our Global Warming: Undo It campaign website at www.undoit.org. There you can sign the emissions petition supporting the Climate Stewardship Act and invite your friends to sign, too. A recorded version of this web cast will also be available on www.undoit.org in the next day so you can watch it again or invite your friends to watch and please take a minute to complete the feedback form when you leave the webcast. Thanks again and good afternoon.

Transcript by Vodium.com.

For more information go to www.undoit.org.