

UNITED STATES PANEL ON CLIMATE CHANGE

MEMORANDUM

Welcome to the U.S. Convention on Climate Change. Each of you is a member of a delegation (interest group) at an upcoming meeting to debate and vote on a bill that is being presented.

The issue: All of you have examined evidence for global climate change and have seen scientific data strongly suggesting that humans are involved in the observed warming of the past century, primarily through the ever-increasing use of fossil fuels. There is growing concern about this issue and a strong global push for action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The most recent international effort was the United Nations Climate Convention at Copenhagen in late 2009. Although the need to prevent dangerous warming was recognized at that meeting, the U.S. and other nations failed to reach any legally-binding agreements. However, the U.S. did pledge to reduce emissions by 17% of 2005 levels by the year 2020, pending Congressional approval. There is a consensus among climate experts that this level of reduction is not aggressive enough to prevent the worst impacts of warming. For this reason, the United States Panel on Climate Change has been asked to consider striving for a more ambitious emissions reduction goal.

The bill: At the upcoming U.S. Convention on Climate Change your delegation will vote on a bill proposing the following agreement to go before Congress:

An agreed-upon reduction of greenhouse gas emissions in the United States by 25% of levels recorded during the year 2005 by the year 2020. This would be achieved through any number of methods, including voluntary reductions, greater use of renewable energy, engineering, and market-based solutions such as cap and trade.

You are urged to carefully consider both the economic impact of passing this legislation as well as the potential cost of not acting on this issue. You will need to do some web research to support your position (see the assignment below).

At our meeting next week you will vote on this bill. A 5/8 majority of the delegations will be required in order to pass or amend this legislation. You may vote to accept, amend, or reject.

You will be assigned to work as a member of one of the eight delegations listed below:

The Delegations:

- 1. U.S. Congressional Subcommittee on Climate Change**
- 2. The Coalition of Concerned Climate Scientists**
- 3. Fossil Fuels for a Strong America**
- 4. The Green Business Organization**
- 5. REALGREEN Environmental Group**
- 6. The Citizen Advocates of America**
- 7. Save Our Small Island Nations and Coasts**
- 8. The Organization for International Business**

Instructions and Assignments (See grading on next page)

Today:

1. Everyone must read and review: a) the position statement for their group (pages 4-5), b) the Executive Summary of the Copenhagen Diagnosis report, (1 page) and c) the Executive Summary of the Stern Review on the economics of climate change (~4 pages). These last two items are found in the “Role-play exercise” folder under “Labs” on the course Blackboard site.
2. Meet with your delegation partner(s) and come up with a strategy to best represent your position in the role-play convention exercise next week. Will you propose to accept, amend, or reject the bill? What will your strategy be?
3. Begin web-researching in support of your position. Find data that you can present during the exercise that supports your position on the proposed bill. Use your instructor as a resource to aid you in finding good materials.

Assignment for the role-play exercise next lab session:

1. Your group must write an at least one-page, single-spaced (2 person groups) or 1.5 page (3 person groups) **position statement** that clearly explains the following:
 - a. Briefly, how you intend to vote on the proposed legislation (accept, amend, or reject).
 - b. Why you intend to vote this way. Give at least three clearly and thoroughly explained reasons with at least three forms of published data (including a written citation of the source) to back up your position. **Your delegation’s position statement is your ticket to participate in the convention. Without it you cannot participate.**
2. Your group must be prepared to give a **5 minute presentation** (this time limit will be strict) in which you will use your position statement to explain your position to the larger group. During this presentation:
 - a. You must present and explain at least two examples of published data that you believe supports your position using Powerpoint, an overhead transparency, or other visual methods.
 - b. Everyone in your group must participate in the presentation and speak.
3. Be prepared to answer a few questions and/or take challenges from the other groups.
4. **Play your role to the best of your ability, even if you don’t agree with it in reality.** Your challenge in this exercise is to play your role and attempt to sway others with a well-reasoned and supported argument.

****To do your best, I strongly recommend that you meet again with your partner(s) before our meeting next week to finish preparation and practice your presentation. Well-practiced presentations stand out and will receive higher scores.**

Grading for this exercise (50 points total)

1. You will be graded individually based on your effort in today's session (10 points). To receive full credit for this portion of the grade, you should be working earnestly towards preparation for the exercise next week (web-surfers and freeloaders beware!).
2. Your group will be graded based on the following rubric for next week's role-play exercise:

Meritorious work (35-40 points) The group prepared a clear and concise position statement with well-founded reasoning that was consistent with their role. Likewise, spokesperson(s) effectively represented the group's position on the emissions reduction bill. In responding to challenges or comments from other students, the spokesperson(s) faithfully represented their group's position. Your group members also made a strong effort to question other groups and used good reasoning in debating with others.

Satisfactory work (25-30 points) The group met most but not all of the criteria for an "Meritorious" score as outlined above. The group may have failed to draft a position statement that effectively explained why they are taking the particular position or may have failed to realistically play the assigned role in some situations. Spokespersons may have been somewhat vague in their statement. Supporting data might not have been used. Your group members might have made some effort to question other groups, but not a large enough effort to be considered meritorious.

Poor work (15-20 points) The group failed to meet most of the criteria described for an "Meritorious" score, and were clearly unprepared for the activity. The group failed to draft a position statement that met the criteria outlined in the assignment. Additionally, the spokesperson(s) failed to provide a clear and concise statement and failed to give a proper explanation for their position. Supporting data were not used by the group in the position statement or in debating other groups. Effort at questioning other groups was minimal or entirely lacking. Alternatively, a group receiving a poor score may have made little or no effort to portray their role as described above in this handout.

****Please note that it is possible to obtain scores between those listed in this rubric. Group members missing one or both sessions will have reduced scores on the group portion of the project.**

DELEGATIONS AND SHORT POSITION DESCRIPTIONS

1. U.S. Congressional Subcommittee on Climate Change

You are all members of the U.S. Congress and, as politicians, you represent a broad array of interests. All of you are concerned with this issue but for different reasons. Some of you have strong records of environmental protection and emissions reduction programs in your home states where these programs are strongly supported. Others are concerned with the potential loss of jobs from your home states that have large interests in the fossil fuel and automobile industry. Like all politicians, your group members are especially concerned with maintaining a strong economy, but you are seeing a growing amount of concern about the climate issue from your constituents. Other groups may seek to influence your vote.

2. Coalition of Concerned Climate Scientists

You have collected a wide variety of data, all clearly indicating that humans are changing the climate of the planet. In the past, your group reported your observations but remained outside of the debate on the impact of climate change. But your observations have revealed some startling changes that are a cause of genuine concern to everyone in the group. There is a clear consensus within your group that you must take a stronger stance on the importance of this issue and make a stronger effort to educate the public. A very small number of climate scientists (not in your group) have publicly challenged the significance of your findings, but it has been determined that most of these scientists are funded by the fossil fuel industry and have a serious conflict of interest.

3. Fossil Fuels For a Strong America

For a long time your group has maintained that the phenomenon of global warming is unproven and that attempts to reduce usage of fossil fuels would come at a prohibitively high economic cost to the country. Fewer people believe that human-caused warming is unproven so now you suggest that the warming will be beneficial. For example, your group claims that the increased CO₂ in the atmosphere will increase plant growth and the vitality of forests and that people in cold places such as the temperate regions of the U.S. will have an increased quality of life. There is still a lot of money (billions) to be made in the fossil fuel industry (at least in the short run) and you don't want alarmist environmentalists scaring people off. Your interest is in convincing other delegates that a major emissions reduction is irresponsible because it will decrease the high standard of living in the U.S.

4. The Green Business Organization

You are in this line of work because you feel that it is the best of both worlds: a chance to make good money and address a critical problem. You see an incredible opportunity to invest in new technologies that will provide cleaner energy to everyone. Some of these technologies are already available (such as hybrid vehicles) and others are being researched (such as hydrogen fuel cells). Many of you believe that with enough money for research you can reduce the nation's fossil fuel consumption by as much as 70%. Your group is ambitious and stands to gain billions of dollars per year if major corporations invest larger amounts of money in your research and technologies.

5. Real Green Environmental Group

Your group is passionately concerned with the protection of the country's natural areas. All of you are aware of the negative consequences of population growth and the expansion of industry into formerly wild areas of the nation. You have strong scientific evidence to suggest that activities such as logging, cattle-raising (especially on large, factory farms), road-building, and the manufacture of certain chemicals decrease the quality of the environment and contribute to the global warming problem. Many of you feel that the environment and natural world should be protected at any cost and that in the long-term, environmental protection will have an incalculable monetary benefit. There are data to support this position.

6. Citizen advocates

You are a “watchdog” group, concerned with the interests of ordinary people. Ideally, the politicians would play this role, but you are here because many people have decided that the politicians don’t have their best interests in mind. Your group is interested in protecting the environment and addressing the climate change issue, but you are also concerned about the feasibility of switching to alternative forms of energy from fossil fuels and the potentially high cost of doing so. Your question is: “will a change to cleaner energy come at net cost or net benefit to the average person?” Other groups may seek to influence your vote.

7. Save Our Small Island Nations and Coasts

You are the voice for many island nations where land is at or only 1-2 m above sea level and slowly flooding. Additionally, you represent the interests of coastal regions of the U.S. that are under special threat of flooding by the end of the century, most notably New Orleans and South Florida. Many of your constituents are also faced with the prospect of having to abandon their home island or coastal region and find new homes in the next 100-200 years if rates of sea level rise continue as projected. Your mandate is clear: Do everything possible to convince the other delegates of your plight and the need to reduce emissions.

8. Organization for International Business

You represent businesses that do international commerce with the world’s fastest growing economic powers. Along with the process of industrialization has come the demand for western-style luxuries including automobiles and other technologies that require fossil fuels. Your concern is that if the proposed bill passes, there will be pressure for industrializing nations to take similar steps which might slow growth and cut profits. You are not against participating in the effort to address the global warming issue, but you don’t want this to cost you valuable business in other nations such as China and India.