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SUMMARY OF JUNE 29 HEARING BY THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES ON CLIMATE CHANGE MITIGATION

FROM: Lisa McNeilly
DATE: June 29, 1993

Senators present: Johnston (Chair), Akaka, Bennett, Bingham, Campbell, Craig, Wallop, Wellstone
Witnesses: O'Leary, Sussman (with Hausker), Wirth submitted testimony

The main purpose of this hearing was for the Committee to gather information on the status and proceedings of the Administration's work on global climate change mitigation. Sec. O'Leary spoke on the President's goals and reported on the June 10-11 conference. Robert Sussman explained the process that would be utilized in reaching the stated goal of emissions reduction (i.e. the purposes of the IAT and the CCMG).

Main questions asked and concerns raised by Committee members:

- o Strong interest in joint implementation was expressed as the most cost-effective means to reduce net GHG emissions (Johnston). O'Leary's response was that joint implementation should be analyzed but that credit for reductions in emissions should not be considered until after 2000.
- o A series of questions were raised on the uncertainty in the science of global warming, both the predicted temperature increases and the effects of these increases (Bennett, Wallop), although several at the table accepted the science as basically accurate.
- o The Committee expressed interest in knowing more about the economic issues and the cost-effectiveness analyses that will be part of the process -- a worry that economics is being ignored.
- o There was discussion about the appropriateness of the U.S committing to targets that were not required by the Rio treaty and that are in advance of any other developed country.
- o Johnston questioned the status of nuclear power in the deliberations, given that no mention of nuclear was made in anyone's testimony. O'Leary said it was an oversight in preparation of her testimony and that nuclear will be analyzed.
- o The Committee questioned the apparent haste with which the policy is being analyzed and finalized.

Other comments:

- o Several comments were made on the lack of Congressional interaction to date.
- o O'Leary committed to "stabilization" but not necessarily to "continuation" of downward trends, at least until the final analyses can be done.
- o Wallop questioned the precedent of other countries having the right to acquire U.S. technology, but he was apparently confusing the Biodiversity and the Framework Convention treaties.
- o In the context of the baseline, the gas tax currently being considered was predicted to produce only a quarter of the emission reductions of the Btu tax.
- o Outstanding: Matthews submitted written questions that were not read at the hearing.