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Press Release

Lugar-Biden Initiative Calls For American Leadership on Climate Change

WASHINGTON, DC – In a bipartisan effort to protect our global climate, U.S. Senator Joe Biden (D-DE) today joined with Dick Lugar (R-IN) in introducing a Senate Resolution calling for the United States to return to international negotiations on climate change. The Lugar-Biden Climate Change Resolution also proposes an official Senate Observer Group to ensure bipartisan Senate support for any new agreements. If adopted, this resolution will replace the last major statement of the Senate's position on international climate change which was made back in 1997, prior to the Kyoto Protocol.

"This is a serious issue and it is time for us to take action," said Biden. "I commend Chairman Lugar for his leadership on global climate change. The U.S. government must face up to our responsibilities on global warming. We need to be engaged in the international process of protecting our global environment from climate change."

The Bush Administration has taken the position that it is premature to engage in discussions about the next stage of international climate action, to follow the first implementation period under the Kyoto Protocol, which runs from 2008 - 2012. The United States is the only G-8 nation that is not a signatory to the Kyoto Protocol. Under the Protocol, industrial nations have committed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions an average of 7% below 1990 levels.

The Lugar-Biden Climate Change Resolution was unveiled at a press conference to tout a new report by the Pew Center on Global Climate Change. The Pew Center Report outlines a variety of flexible negotiating formats to revive international climate talks, bringing both the U.S. and developing nations into the process.

"Global climate change is the most profound international environmental challenge we face," said Biden. "If we are going to find an effective international response to this global problem, the Pew Center's important report will show us the way."

The U.S. government's Climate Action Report of 2002 showed that global warming will have serious environmental consequences for the U.S., including an increased risk of storm damage to coastal communities, such as in the Gulf region.

"Since walking away from the Kyoto Protocol, President Bush's policy on global warming has been to go it alone and cloud the debate. The resolution we are offering today is a chance to clear the air and get back on the right side of history," said Biden. "Our resolution gives the Senate, with its constitutional power to ratify treaties, a chance to go on record in favor of a global solution to a global problem."

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