UNITED STATES SENATE COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENTAL AND PUBLIC WORKS

KSMUN 2018
Chair’s Letter

Dear Delegates,

We are delighted to welcome you to the United States Senate Committee of Environment and Public Works as part of our second Kent School Model United Nations Conference. Your chairs for the committee are Yusef Abaza and Sarah Smith. Yusef is a junior at Kent School, from Connecticut, and has been an active member of MUN throughout his high school career. Sarah is a current sophomore and has been in MUN since her freshman year. We both thank you joining the our committee at this year’s KSMUN conference.

Our committee deals with the ever-growing threat from the warming of Earth’s atmosphere. As we approach $1.0^\circ C$ above the average pre-industrial temperature, scientists expect to see high risk of permanent damage to threatened ecosystems (like the Arctic and coral reefs) and moderate risk of more extreme weather events. We are already seeing this in the record-breaking Atlantic hurricane season and the worst wildfires California was ever experienced. As we continue getting warmer, we come closer and closer to flirting with global catastrophe and irreversible damage to our planet. Moreover, climate change threatens human health, with pollution and heat waves, and our economy, with infrastructure damage, recovery costs, and crop loss.

It surprised me to see Yale’s 2016 Climate Communication Report, which stated two encouraging facts:
- 82% of Americans support funding research into renewable energy sources
- 74% support regulating CO$_2$ as a pollutant

As the American public continues to call for increased regulations of greenhouse gas emissions, it is now time for the Congress to act. The focus of this committee will be on negotiating a bipartisan piece of legislation which will address America’s role in fighting global warming, set goals for and make plans to reduce our emissions, and will support your constituents. This will require knowing the position of your senator and the specific needs of your states.

All are welcome in to join in this committee, but a basic knowledge of the workings of MUN discussion, global warming and the problems it is creating, and some proposed and viable solutions will aid you in the committee. All delegates are expected to research these things and come ready with the information that they will need, as electronic devices will not be allowed in the debate room. If it is extremely necessary to use a device, you may be excused from the room; however, you are always welcome to seek help from the dais. We encourage you to come in with printed notes. As this is such a broad and complicated topic, having a good understanding of the issues and positions will help accelerate and add depth to the debate. This background guide a good starting point for your research, but is far from all the information that you will need to know in order to negotiate a favorable outcome. We expect each delegate to write a page-long position paper explaining their stance on the issues and consolidating their research.

If you have any questions or see any mistakes in this guide, please feel free to email any one of your chairs or any of the other members of KSMUN. We thank you for being a part of our conference and we look forward to seeing you there.

Your chairs,

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Introduction

Over the past 30 years the rate of Earth’s warming atmosphere has increased rapidly. Melting glaciers/snow caps and increasing ocean levels have been affected by the increasing Earth's temperature. About 200 countries are currently signed to the Paris treaty, which means that they have agreed to use their power to decrease their effects on the environment. The Paris Agreement’s goal was to make a central agreement to organize efforts to combat climate change. One hundred-ninety-seven countries have signed this doctrine, which meant each country had to limit the amount of greenhouse gases omitted. This caused major controversy, with the United State’s President Trump has recently taken the United States out of the agreement, which was previously signed by former President Barack Obama.

The US Senate is torn over this issue and shows opposing beliefs on how to approach global warming actions. Generally, the liberal conservatives in government are more likely to agree with global warming scientists and expect more weather disasters coming up. The republicans in the senate are generally skeptic of the scientists putting the fault of climate change on humans. This split in the senate may further prevent amendments that could potentially help climate change and/or bring the United States back into the Paris agreement.

Background Information & Topics for Debate

America’s Role in Fighting Global Warming

In December 2015, then-President Obama helped negotiate the Paris Climate Accords, which set goals and outlined policies for UN nations to help stop our trend towards 2.0°C above pre-industrial temperatures. However, in May 2017, President Trump announced his intention to remove the country from the non-binding treaty, claiming it hurt the America on the world stage. Although America cannot leave until 2019, under the terms of the treaty, his declaration carried great symbolic weight. As the United States relinquishes its position as a leader in the fight against climate change, with our removal from the Paris Climate Accords, the United States Senate has the chance to symbolically signal their support of clean power and a healthy environment. Consider:

- a recognition that climate change is real, not a hoax, and caused by human activity
- a reinstatement of the goals set forth in the Paris Climate Agreement
- a request to formally re-enter the Agreement

Make Plans to Reduce our Emissions

In order to effectively reduce America’s emissions, the legislation will need to include a multifaceted and bipartisan approach to the problem. This includes setting concrete goals for the future; i.e. a percentage reduction by a certain year. Many on both the left and right of American politics support a market-based solution to climate change. Many Republicans would also like to see tax cuts and short-term support for fossil-fuel jobs. The left wants subsidies for companies and individuals investing in or buying clean energy. They also desire more regulation of the fossil fuel industry. You will need to compromise and find ways to make politically viable solutions. Consider:

- a carbon cap-and-trade system
- tax cuts for corporations which utilize clean energy
- subsidies for clean energy and green products (electric cars, etc.)
**Blocs and Positions**

- **Lamar Alexander (R-TN)** **recognizes that climate change is real and caused primarily by human activity. He wants to protect public lands, especially in Tennessee, support research at the Oak Ridge National Laboratory, and use a free-market approach to solve the rising global temperatures.**
  

- **John Barrasso (R-WY)** does not recognize climate change as real nor that it is caused primarily by human activity. He has voted against every pro-Earth bill so far. He will soon take over Sen. James Inhofe’s role as the chair Committee on Environment and Public Works and is also against the Paris Agreement and global warming changes. Barrasso has voted against every pro-Earth bill so far.


3. **John Boozman (R-AR)**

   “Clean Power Plan,” which is essentially a national tax on energy that drives up costs on hardworking families and eliminates jobs in the energy sector. While fossil fuels will continue to play an important role in the short term, we must work toward developing and expanding renewable sources of energy in order to address our current and future needs. We need to use everything our nation has been blessed with, including wind, solar, biomass and hydropower to diversify our energy portfolio. Emissions-free nuclear must also play a big role.

  3. [https://www.boozman.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/energy_1](https://www.boozman.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/energy_1)

4. **Cory Booker (D-NJ)**

   Climate change is a pressing economic and national security crisis that especially threatens coastal areas in New Jersey. In addition to posing serious problems to our country as a whole, the effects of climate change disparately affect more vulnerable, lower-income communities. As a member of the Environment and Public Works Committee, Senator Booker has stood up for cleaner, healthier communities. He has worked to ban oil drilling off of New Jersey's coastline, clean up Superfund sites, improve air quality, support animal welfare safeguards, and strengthen national chemical safety laws to better protect families from toxic substances.

  4. [https://www.booker.senate.gov/?p=issue&id=70](https://www.booker.senate.gov/?p=issue&id=70)

5. **Ben Cardin (D-MD)**

   Diversifying our energy sources creates competition – stabilizing and lowering energy prices. And thinking beyond fossil fuels buried in unstable or unreliable countries strengthens our national security. Moving to alternative and renewable energy sources also will help reduce the impact of climate change. I will continue to strongly advocate for enhanced U.S. leadership on clean energy development and deployment.


6. **Tom Carper (D-DE), Ranking Member**

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By advocating a multi-faceted and common-sense approach to our nation’s environmental and energy challenges, we can reduce harmful pollutants, lead healthier lives, lower our energy costs, and help put Americans to work manufacturing new products and technologies stamped "Made in the U.S.A." to sell here and export around the world. In order to achieve energy security and protect public health, I believe this country has to invest in clean energy sources, including nuclear energy. I am a firm believer in the promise of offshore wind power. The development of offshore wind means reliable energy, good paying American jobs, and independence from fuels that pollute our air and drain our economy.  
https://www.carper.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/energyenvironment

6. Tammy Duckworth (D-IL)  
Climate change is one of the gravest environmental, economic and national security threats of our time, and we’re already experiencing its devastating effects in Illinois and across the country. Our military leaders have long understood that increased famine and drought caused by climate change is contributing to political instability across the globe – but it seems that our President does not. Instead of leading the way towards a more sustainable future, he is prepared to retreat from our global responsibilities and deliver yet another a self-inflicted blow to America’s credibility on the world stage by having our country join Syria and Nicaragua as the only three countries not party to this agreement. While the rest of the world moves forward with trillions of dollars of investments in clean energy jobs and technologies, America is losing its influence and our economy is being left behind.”

7. Joni Ernst (R-IA)  
Despite Ernst’s belief that climate change exists, she is undecided on the actual cause for these conditions. Along with her reluctance to pinpoint the cause of climate change, Ernst has pledged to throw away the Environmental Protection Agency and has shown her opposition to the Clean Water Act.  

8. Deb Fischer (R-NE)  
Nebraska has experienced concerning dryness in the past few years, leading to loss in crops and properties. Fischer believes that these costly conditions are due to weather change and have not been caused by human activity. She also shows her opposition to cap-and-trade, which is a governmental limit for pollution emissions.  
https://www.ofa.us/climate-change-deniers/deb-fischer-nebraska/

9. Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY)  
Gillibrand strongly believes in defending our environment through the process of decreasing use of fossil fuels and putting the United State’s energy in renewable resources. New York is vulnerable to due to the amount of resources needing to be preserved, such as the Great Lakes and Adirondack mountains. Gillibrand has proven her commitment to helping the environment by serving on the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee.  
https://www.gillibrand.senate.gov/issues/environment

10. Lindsay Graham (R-NC) **  
One of the only Republicans that believe global warming is due to human-cause and the emissions of greenhouse gases. Graham supports the “price on Carbon” and finding a solution to fix global warming.  

11. Kamala Harris (D-CA)
Harris strongly believes that climate change is real and is known for questioning congressman Pompeo for questioning climate change. California has been very susceptible to droughts and very high temperatures, making wildfires largely popular. The California governor makes plans to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by using renewable electricity, reduce petroleum, etc.

http://climatechange.ca.gov

12. Jim Inhofe (R-OK)
Inhofe is the former chair of the Committee on Environment and Public Works and is against climate change and believes that the fight to end global warming is really just a fight between countries for control.

13. Joe Manchin (D-WV) **
Manchin strongly believes that the people are the cause for the earth’s climate problems. He wants to use new technologies in order to give people clean, but also affordable energy.

14. Ed Markey (D-MA)
Markey is a supporter of the Paris Agreement and co-wrote the American Clean Energy and Security Act. Markey plans to cut half of America’s oil intake by changing the fuel economy. He believes in clean energy and cleantech jobs and reducing the use of foreign oils.
https://www.edmarkey.com/issues/climate/

15. Claire McCaskill (D-MO) **
McCaskill believes that the United States can become energy independent and has voted yes in making oil-production and exporting cartels illegal. McCaskill also voted no on barring the Environmental Protection Agency from putting a limit on greenhouse gases.
http://www.ontheissues.org/International/Claire_McCaskill_Energy_+_Oil.htm

16. Jeff Merkley (D-OR)
Merkley is a supporter of the Paris Agreement and believes that carbon pollution needs to decrease through the changing of the United States major fishing and foresting businesses. He wants to increase the use of wind and solar powers.
https://www.jeffmerkley.com/issues/climate-change/

17. Shelley Moore Capito (R-WV)
West Virginia has about nine named designated natural disaster areas due to the severe droughts that have affected many crops. Along with droughts, West Virginia has faced many severe floods and storms. Despite the global change taking place in West Virginia, Capito doesn’t believe that human released carbon dioxide is damaging the Earth.
18. Jerry Moran (R-KS)
Moran stands against people that believe in changing gas emissions for the sake of global warming due to the increase in cost for consumers. In 2011 Moran was part of a group of senators that prevented the rest of the senate from passing an act to lower greenhouse gases and trying to fix climate change.

19. Mike Rounds (R-SD)
Rounds agrees with Trump pulling out of Paris Agreement because it would cost the US too much money and would only help the other countries involved if the US stayed in the agreement.

20. Bernie Sanders (I-VT) *
Sanders believes in the pressing issue of man-caused climate change that is affecting the planet. Sanders puts blame on the executives putting money into the coal, oil, and gas companies that are preventing a change to prevent climate change. His goals to help climate change are to cut carbon pollution, make up a Clean-Energy Workforce and therefore give back money to consumers that were affected by the big gas and oil companies.
https://berniesanders.com/issues/climate-change/

21. Richard Shelby (R-AL)
Alabama has several designated primary disaster areas due to drought affecting crop growth and flooding has damaged buildings and proves further threat in the southeast. Shelby is skeptical about the science behind human-made climate change and believes that there should be set proof before any changes are made.

22. Dan Sullivan (R-AK)
Alaska’s temperatures have dramatically increased throughout the years and further causes the decline is sea ice in the Arctic. Since most roads have been built on permafrost and has been exposed to thawing, reducing the allowance of citizens to drive across. Sullivan believes that although there is seen to have been a change in the climate, there is no sole reason for global warming.
https://www.ofa.us/climate-change-deniers/dan-sullivan-alaska/

23. Roger Wicker (R-MS)
Wicker believes that the increase in carbon dioxide in the environment cannot be proven to be the fault of mankind and can not show what the carbon dioxide’s effect on the environment is. Mississippi has faced a Major Disaster Declaration due to severe storms and has received about $50 million from FEMA to help after Tropical STorm Isaac.
https://www.ofa.us/climate-change-deniers/roger-wicker-mississippi/

24. Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI)
Whitehouse is a major climate change advocate despite Trump’s attempts to pull the US of America out of the Paris Agreement. Believes that human activity and greenhouse gas emissions are the causes of
global warming. Despite America Whitehouse argues that climate change deniers don’t have any alternative argument to the idea that humans are the cause of global warming.

https://www.whitehouse.senate.gov/news/speeches/time-to-wake-up-storms-of-change-are-brewing-

*Sanders is affiliated as an independent, but caucuses with the Democrats.  
**These members are not actually on the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee, but we judged they would make this committee more interesting.

Possible Crises

- A large out-of-season hurricane sinks a large American cargo ship, killing 108 citizens. A poll puts 98% confidence in the scientific community that climate change strengthened the hurricane enough to be deadly. Support for stricter environmental regulations rises from 59% to 65%. The generic ballot for the 2018 elections goes from +9% to +12% Democratic, as the Democratic party comes out strongly in favor of more regulation.

- A large coal mine in Virginia closes right after new statewide environmental regulations are put into place. A profile of a now-unemployed poor worker lands on the front page of the NYT and causes many new outlets to focus on this. Support for stricter environmental regulations decreases from 59% to 54%. The generic ballot for the 2018 elections goes from +9% to +7% Democratic, with the Democratic party strongly in favor of more regulation.

More Resources

http://times-up.org/climate-change/climate-change-background