July 28, 2009

The Honorable Barbara Boxer, Chairwoman  
Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works  
United States Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable John D. Rockefeller, Chairman  
Senate Committee on Commerce, Science and Technology

The Honorable Bill Nelson, Chairman  
Subcommittee on Science and Space  
Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Technology

The Honorable Maria Cantwell, Chairwoman  
Subcommittee on Oceans, Atmosphere, Fisheries and Coast Guard  
Senate Committee on Commerce, Science and Technology

The Honorable John Kerry, Chairman  
Subcommittee on Communications, Technology, and the Internet  
Senate Committee on Commerce, Science and Technology

Dear Chairwoman Boxer, Chairman Rockefeller, Chairman Nelson, Chairwoman Cantwell, and Chairman Kerry:

On behalf of the University Corporation for Atmospheric Research (UCAR), we encourage you to preserve and incorporate a central role for climate science and research in the Senate climate change bill. Strong climate science was the wake up call on global warming and today serves as the justification for reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Maintaining a robust program of climate research remains critical so that we can continuously reassess the state of global climate change, gauge the effectiveness of GHG caps and other mitigation efforts, provide more detailed information about the impacts of climate change at the regional and local levels, and inform best practices for climate adaptation planning and strategy.

UCAR is a consortium of 73 North American research universities with graduate programs in the atmospheric sciences. In addition to its education and outreach activities, UCAR has managed National Center for Atmospheric Research (NCAR) in Boulder, Colorado on behalf of the National Science Foundation for almost 50 years. NCAR is world renowned for its climate science, and its climate models were the most cited in the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change’s Fourth Assessment report released in 2007.
Chairwoman Boxer, Chairman Rockefeller, Chairman Nelson,
Chairwoman Cantwell, Chairman Kerry
July 28, 2009
Page 2 of 3

We are pleased that H.R. 2454, the American Clean Energy and Security Act, includes several sections in the “Adapting to Climate Change” subtitle that would fund and improve federal coordination of climate research and climate services and promote ongoing climate science and research. Specifically, we support that H.R. 2454 would:

- Establish a National Climate Service
- Improve on the current structure and coordination of federal climate change research
- Provide allowance revenues to the states for climate adaptation planning
- Require each state to submit a State Climate Adaptation Plan
- Establish other federal programs to coordinate public health, natural resources, and international adaptation efforts

As you consider incorporating these programs into the Senate climate change bill, we first encourage you to keep each of these programs intact in some form in the Senate bill. Global warming of about 2 degrees Celsius by the end of this century is unavoidable and thus we must begin to prepare for the consequences. American businesses and communities will need to adapt strategically to climate change and are looking for guidance in the way of information and other climate services.

Second, these sections can be significantly improved by adhering to the following guiding principles regarding the programs listed above:

1) membership, incorporation, and participation of all climate-relevant federal agencies;
2) incorporation and participation of valuable non-federal contributors, such as universities, laboratories, and other research organizations; and
3) strong leadership and coordination at the White House level, such as by the Office of Science and Technology Policy.

Specifically, we recommend as a model the National Climate Enterprise Act, which Rep. Madeleine Bordallo introduced earlier this year, as Title II of H.R. 2685. While there are several proposals for a climate service worthy of discussion, the approach taken in H.R. 2685 provides for a strong interagency coordinating structure and mechanisms for involving non-federal stakeholders that will be essential to the success of a National Climate Service.

A National Climate Service will deliver the best possible climate information to individuals, businesses, and communities to help them build resilience and adapt strategically to the impacts of climate change. NOAA in particular has an excellent foundation on which to build that is relevant to adaptation activities. Using all the existing resources and capabilities of NOAA, other relevant federal agencies, and non-federal partners in the university, non-profit, and private sectors, will improve the accuracy, quality, and volume of the data and information available. We urge you to incorporate a multi-agency and community partner model into any legislation establishing a National Climate Service.

Additionally, we believe it is critical that a National Climate Service and all other federal research and adaptation programs have leadership authority at the highest level capable of coordinating activities between all involved entities. The National Climate Enterprise Act, as a model, would achieve this by designating the White House’s Office of Science and Technology Policy as Chair of the Interdepartmental Oversight Board that would govern the National Climate Enterprise. This high-level oversight capacity would help to ensure interagency cooperation in the Enterprise, a feature that UCAR believes would be lost if the climate service were to be housed in any one single agency.
Chairwoman Boxer, Chairman Rockefeller, Chairman Nelson,
Chairwoman Cantwell, Chairman Kerry
July 28, 2009
Page 3 of 3

H.R. 2685 also provides numerous other opportunities to include non-federal stakeholders in the National Climate Enterprise. It specifies that non-federal entities may serve on the Interagency Coordinating Committee responsible for developing the strategies and activities of the Enterprise, as well as the Enterprise Advisory Board, which would provide advice to the Interagency Coordinating Committee. Additionally, non-federal research entities can become certified as contributors to a new National Climate Data Network. This involvement by the extramural research community will help to ensure that the information and services produced and delivered by the Enterprise are science-backed and stakeholder-driven.

The above principles can improve the other adaptation and climate science sections of the climate change bill as well. For example, funding to the states for projects to build resilience to the impacts of climate change could include language that would enable the states to use these resources to partner with universities, laboratories, and other research institutions for help with project planning and prioritization. This would help to ensure that state climate adaptation projects are appropriately timed and scaled, cost-effective, and based on the best-available science.

We strongly urge you to consider inclusion of these guiding principles – a strong interagency role, a strong non-federal partner role, and strong leadership at the White House level – into the climate science and adaptation provisions in the climate change legislation. We appreciate your consideration of our views and want to thank you for your continued hard work on behalf of climate science and our nation’s future. Please do not hesitate to contact us if we can be of any assistance as the legislative process moves forward.

Sincerely,

Richard A. Anthes
Richard A. Anthes, President
University Corporation for Atmospheric Research

Eric Barron, Director
National Center for Atmospheric Research

cc: The Honorable Madeleine Bordallo
    The Honorable Mark Udall