

Paul Baer

Statement by Paul Baer, Climate Economist, Union of Concerned Scientists

To the meeting of the California Air Resources Board

February 20, 2014

My name is Paul Baer and I am a climate economist with the Union of Concerned Scientists. I would like to thank the members of the Board for the opportunity to speak here today. In the Scoping Plan, the Air Resource Board sets forth the need to set mid-term targets for global warming emission reduction to spur and gauge progress toward meeting a 2050 target for global warming emissions. This is a position which is strongly supported in California's scientific community.

To share this support, it is my privilege to submit for the record an Open Letter on Climate Change from California Climate Scientists and Economists.

One hundred and one scientists and economists who live and work in California and who are experts in some aspect of the climate change problem – whether it be atmospheric science, climate impacts, or climate policy solutions – have already signed this letter to the Governor and California State Legislators.

The letter calls for the State to continue and strengthen its leadership role in establishing strong, science-based targets for the reduction of carbon dioxide and other heat trapping gases. Specifically, it calls for an enforceable, science-based 2030 target. The lead signers of the letter, (one of whom is also here today to testify), include nine of the state's most distinguished academics:

Nobel Prize Winner Kenneth Arrow of Stanford University

Roger Bales of the University of California, Merced

Hilda Blanco of the University of Southern California

Gary Griggs of the University of California, Santa Cruz

Michael Hanemann of the University of California, Berkeley

Daniel Kammen of the University of California, Berkeley

Pamela Matson of Stanford University

Richard Norgaard of the University of California, Berkeley

And Richard Somerville of the Scripps Institute of Oceanography at UC San Diego.

The signers include seven principal researchers for the Third Assessment from the California Climate Change Center, and eight of the signers are lead authors of Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) reports.

Again, on behalf of myself, the Union of Concerned Scientists and the signers of the letter, thank you for your time.

An Open Letter on Climate Change  
from California Climate Scientists and Economists

February 19, 2014

Dear Governor Brown and California State Legislators:

California's leadership is needed now more than ever to address the risks of a dangerously warming climate. We urge the state's policy makers to adopt a science-based, heat-trapping emissions target for 2030 that puts California on a path to meeting our 2050 goals.

The science is clear that human activity is the dominant cause of warming over the last half century.<sup>i</sup> If global emissions continue to rise, the scope and severity of impacts will accelerate. Already communities across California are being forced to cope with many risks, including increased wildfires, more frequent and extreme heat waves, a strained water management system, growing risks to high value agricultural commodities, greater summer electricity demand, and more coastal flooding.<sup>ii</sup>

While we must adapt to the impacts of a changing climate, California must also take ambitious steps to reduce heat-trapping emissions that would cause much more devastating impacts in the decades to come. We are well-positioned to lead the world in this effort. The state has a goal of 80 percent reduction in global warming emissions below 1990 levels by 2050, established by Executive Order S-3-05. More importantly, California's policy makers deserve tremendous credit for adopting and implementing the California Global Warming Solutions Act of 2006 (AB 32) and numerous coordinated sustainability actions. The state has brought innovative climate policies off the drawing board and into practice, spurring investment, innovation, and jobs in growing a "green technology" sector. Moreover, the state's progress demonstrates that it is possible for a growing major economy to reduce emissions substantially at very modest cost.

California must continue to play a leadership role and to serve as a model for much-needed federal and international action. Maintaining a price on carbon dioxide and other global warming pollutants is key, but not sufficient to adequately reduce emissions. Policies that promote renewable energy, low carbon fuels, and cleaner transportation are also critical.

Yet as we approach 2020, we need medium-term targets to continue the progress we have begun. To achieve the steep reductions necessary to limit the worst impacts of climate change, lawmakers and regulators should adopt and implement enforceable emissions caps for 2030 and beyond. Every sector involved in addressing climate change, from energy to transportation, will need sufficient time to prepare to meet new targets. The longer we wait the harder and more costly it will be. Please begin now to set science-based heat-trapping emissions targets for 2030.

i. Climate Change 2013: The Physical Science Basis. Working Group I Contribution to the IPCC 5th Assessment Report - Changes to the Underlying Scientific/Technical Assessment. 2013. Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. Available online at <http://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar5/wg1>

ii. Moser, S., J. Ekstrom, G. Franco. 2012. Our Changing Climate 2012 Vulnerability & Adaptation to the Increasing Risks from Climate Change in California. Prepared for the California Energy Commission and the California Natural Resources Agency. Publication # CEC-500-2012-007. Available online at [http://climatechange.ca.gov/climate\\_action\\_team/reports/third\\_assessment/index.html](http://climatechange.ca.gov/climate_action_team/reports/third_assessment/index.html)

## An Open Letter on Climate Change from California Climate Scientists and Economists

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