

Summary of CRE Report Critiquing the EPA “Global Warming” Website

In April 1999 the CRE issued a “Working Paper” that critiqued the quality of information that EPA disseminates to the public on the EPA Global Warming Website.¹ The paper explains the need to improve quality control over information that Federal agencies disseminate to the public, using the EPA Global Warming Website as a case study.

The Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 directed the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), in the Executive Office of the President, to issue quality control regulations to govern Federal agencies’ information-related activities, including dissemination of information to the public. OMB has not issued such regulations. The CRE’s April 1999 paper illustrates why such regulations are needed, including a mechanism that affected persons could use to petition Federal agencies to correct poor-quality information.

The CRE’s April 1999 paper does not take a position on the merits of the science regarding global warming and global climate change. The scientific debate is robust and ongoing. Future research hopefully will lead to more definitive answers to valid scientific questions that exist.

The paper addresses how EPA presents the available body of science to the public on the EPA Web site. The paper concerns both:

1. The quality of information *per se*; and
2. The quality of EPA’s presentation (including omission) of significant available information.

The paper demonstrates that there is inadequate quality control regarding both the information and how EPA presents it on the EPA Website. The paper documents instances where EPA provides the public with information that is inaccurate, incomplete, or presented selectively or out of context. The resulting publicly-disseminated information could persuade the American public and non-Federal political entities to:

1. Reach or accept scientifically-unfounded conclusions of “fact” regarding these complex scientific questions; and

¹ *How OMB Data Quality Regulations Will Help Resolve Disputes Over Global Warming*, Center for Regulatory Effectiveness, April 1999, also available on the CRE Website, <<http://www.TheCRE.com>>.

2. Take uninformed and premature action to address global warming and global climate change that will result in significant economic and social consequences for the United States.

The paper illustrates the need to improve quality control, by examining three examples of selective, inaccurate, or otherwise misleading information presented at EPA's Internet site on "Global Warming":

1. The first example illustrates how the EPA site gives the reader the strong impression that scientists have reached a strong consensus that global warming and -- as the result of global warming -- global climate change:
 - Are both in fact occurring; and
 - Are both in fact caused by human activity;
2. The second example discusses EPA's predictions regarding the spread of insect-transmitted diseases in Missouri as the result of global warming and global climate change (Missouri represents just one of 50 State-specific predictive discussions that EPA presents on its Web site); and
3. The third discusses EPA's predictions regarding changes in precipitation in Missouri as the result of global warming and global climate change.

The examples document, with Attachments from the EPA Global Warming Website and other sources, why the information as presented by EPA is erroneous, inaccurate, or misleading and in specific need of correction. The paper includes pertinent information or statements such as scientific *caveats* from the report of the United Nations' Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (*IPCC 1995*), but which EPA does not present, or minimizes, on its Website.

Conclusions from the paper include:

- < As a matter of national policy and basic "good government" principles, the Federal Government should take responsibility for ensuring the quality of data and information that it disseminates to the public.
- < The Federal Government should establish principles for assuring the quality and utility of data and information disseminated to the public by Federal agencies, including requirements that data and information be accurate, reliable, complete (within feasibility), presented in context, and objective (for example, by distinguishing factual information from information that is influenced by policy considerations or other bias, and by identifying the

limitations or uncertainties of the database or information source).

- < The public should challenge, and seek correction of, incorrect, incomplete, or misleading information disseminated by Federal agencies with respect to global warming and global climate change.