

THE SALEM REPORT

A lot of the legislative agenda is driven by assumptions that have reached the level of given facts. Science is an ever changing rubric and even such core principles as gravity have been modified over the years as more information has become available. As we enter into a debate on our various courses of action, I think it is important to examine the base line to see if there is enough "real" science to warrant the direction we are taking. To that end my next few newsletters will deal with Oregon's environmental agenda.

If you ask any climatologist (who has not bought into a political agenda) if the planet is getting warmer the answer will be; "we don't know". What we do know is the planet was getting cooler in the 1980's, warmer in the 1990's and is now getting cooler again. We also know the warmest year recorded in this country was 1934, so none of this is new. But then the relevant issue is not generic climate change, rather what impact human activity is having on it. Clearly politicians on the national stage have either bought into the concept that global warming is human caused or are giving it lip service to gain political favor. It is unfortunate that we are allowing political science to trump pure science.

Al Gore has been given credit for being the father of this movement culminating with his movie "An Inconvenient Truth". I have seen the movie and would have to say it was very well done. There were lots of impressive graphs and charts and computer models all driving to his conclusion. Unfortunately there were a large number of inaccuracies that bring his conclusion into question. For example the tying of carbon levels in Antarctic ice core samples to historic climate events has subsequently proven to be inaccurate. The most troubling to me was the cartoon about the polar bears disappearing when the fact is the polar bear population has been growing over the last two decades.

There is one basic flaw in using computer models to predict the future. One has to assume all factors and data inputted to create the model will remain constant, and the one thing we do know about nature is it will always be in a state of change. So if just one element changes it makes any projection based on the model inaccurate and the error will become greater the further out in time one takes the prediction. Weathermen input data into a computer model to predict the weather. When we see how often they can be wrong on tomorrow's weather, how can we have any faith in a prediction 50 or 100 years out into the future?

The answer is we can't, but fortunately in this country we have definable environmental standards which include; the Clean Water Act and the Clean Air Act. Compliance with these standards should be enough to satisfy our needs for environmental protection, and I support compliance with these Acts. If one looks at our industrial, forestry and agricultural practices as recently as 60 years ago compared to today, one finds virtually all things have changed. Where our industries used to pour black smoke into the sky 24/7 there is now no industry in the nation without a highly effective emission control system in place. We no longer freely dump toxic substances into our rivers and our vehicle emissions have been greatly reduced. We are doing a good job of environmental protection, and we are getting better at it all the time.

So why are we as a society so ready to accept this new paradigm with undefined objectives? In my opinion it is all about power and money, and I will get into this dynamic in my next editorial. I do consider myself to be an environmentalist; I just think it is time for some truth.

Sincerely,

Senator Jeff Kruse