

# Statement of Senior Religious Leaders on Global Climate Change and Poverty

Dear Member of Congress:

As senior leaders of major communities of faith – across an extraordinarily broad spectrum of denominations – we are writing to convey our common conviction that the needs of people in poverty must be a central priority as you and your colleagues develop legislation to address the critical challenge of global climate change.

On this issue, our various religious organizations, which serve millions of Americans from every income level, race, age group, cultural tradition, and community, are guided by scripture. Because God declares creation to be "very good" (Gen. 1:31), we work "to till and to tend the garden" (Gen. 2:15). Because "the Earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof" (Ps. 24 :1), we seek to assure that its gifts are used for the well-being of all. Because we will be judged by how we care for "the least of these" (Mt. 25:35), we consider first and foremost the impact of our actions on the most vulnerable. And in God's covenant "which I make between me and you and every living creature for perpetual generations," (Gen. 9:9-10) we are bound to act today to assure the well-being of life now and in the future.

These and other scriptural mandates do not necessarily prescribe specific policies. At a hearing on June 7, 2007, of the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee, this biblical foundation led representatives of our diverse communities to agree on a core set of moral principles that should shape our nation's response to climate change.

Their testimony (enclosed) held four conclusions in common:

- 1) There is sufficient scientific consensus about the dangers of global climate change and the moral principle of prudence requires us to act now to protect the common good.
- 2) There is persuasive evidence that the consequences of climate change will fall disproportionately on the world's most vulnerable people and inaction will only worsen their suffering.
- 3) Policies aimed at addressing global climate change should seek to enhance rather than diminish the economic situation of people in poverty.
- 4) Policies should seek to help vulnerable populations here and abroad adapt to adverse climate impacts and actively participate in efforts to address climate change.

We ask that representatives from our communities have the opportunity to meet with you to offer our perspectives before legislation is considered, debated and decided. We welcome the important efforts you are undertaking to seek to respond to the call for us to be good stewards. We recognize what a daunting task Congress faces in crafting adequate responses to this complicated challenge. At the same time, we recognize that because of the magnitude of the

climate issue, which will literally and likely affect all of humankind, our policy choices must be informed by and be consistent with the moral principles that bind us together.

A fundamental moral principle for our faith communities is to protect the voiceless and the vulnerable. As such, it is imperative that any legislation passed by Congress must have a goal of shielding those who contribute the least to global warming from suffering the worst of its consequences, and that those with the fewest resources should have their economic circumstances enhanced rather than diminished by implementation of the responses to it.

Thank you for your attention to our concerns.

Sincerely,



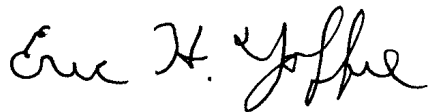
Dr. Leith Anderson  
President, National Association of Evangelicals



The Reverend Michael E. Livingston  
President, National Council of Churches



Most Reverend William Skylstad  
President, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops



Rabbi Eric H. Yoffie  
President, Union for Reform Judaism

The Very Reverend Leonid Kishkovsky  
Director of External Affairs, Orthodox Church in America.