



ENVIRONMENTAL AND ENERGY STUDY INSTITUTE

# NOTICE

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## What Does Climate Change Mean for the Arctic? How is Alaska Being Affected?

Tuesday, March 15, 2005

2:00-4:00 p.m., 192 Dirksen Senate Office Building

The Environmental and Energy Study Institute (EESI) invites you to a Congressional briefing on the Arctic Climate Impact Assessment (ACIA) and climate change impacts already observed in Alaska. The assessment is an intergovernmental report based on a four-year scientific study of the Arctic conducted by an international team of 300 scientists and sponsored by the eight arctic nations (Canada, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Russia, Sweden and the United States) and six indigenous people's organizations. It concludes that the average winter temperatures in Alaska and other arctic regions have increased by 4 to 7°F (3-4°C) in the past 50 years, twice the rate of the rest of the globe, and are projected to continue rising for the next century. Alaska, in particular, is being affected by climate change and experienced its warmest summer on record in 2004, characterized by its worst fire season, unprecedented insect outbreaks, and significant coastal erosion. The warming has caused a decline in summer sea ice extent and thickness, allowing seasonal storms to increasingly erode portions of the Alaskan coastline. The Government Accountability Office (GAO) estimates costs of \$100-400 million to move an endangered Alaskan village, with some 184 villages seen as susceptible to flooding and erosion. The briefing will feature three leading climate change experts:

- **Dr. Robert Corell**, Chair, ACIA, and Senior Policy Fellow, Policy Program of the American Meteorological Society
- **Dr. Pål Prestrud**, Vice-Chair, ACIA, and Director, Center for International Climate and Environmental Research (CICERO), Oslo, Norway
- **Dr. Heidi Cullen**, Climate Expert, The Weather Channel, formerly with the National Center for Atmospheric Research (NCAR)

Dr. Robert Corell, ACIA's Chair, said, "The Arctic is now experiencing some of the most rapid and severe climate change on Earth. Over the next 100 years, climate change is expected to accelerate, contributing to major physical, ecological, social, and economic changes, many of which have already begun. Changes in arctic climate will also affect the rest of the world through increased global warming and rising sea levels.....Although it will be very difficult to limit near-term consequences resulting from past emissions, many longer-term impacts could be reduced significantly by reducing global emissions over the course of this century." ACIA vice-chair Dr. Pål Prestrud, who guided a delegation of American senators that visited Svalbard, a Norwegian Territory, to learn about climate change in the Arctic, said, "Without US participation in the climate regime, there is little hope of attaining global emissions reductions that can make a difference." The Weather Channel's climate expert, Dr. Heidi Cullen, recently ran a 5-part series exploring the effect of global warming on Alaska and its residents, reporting that the average winter temperature in Alaska has increased more than 6 °F since 1948; most of Alaska's permafrost is now just barely frozen, potentially affecting the Trans-Alaska Pipeline System; climate change-induced erosion is threatening many areas; and large tracts of Alaskan forests are becoming more vulnerable to attack by normally cold-sensitive beetles. Referring to the damage in Alaska, Senator Stevens (R-AK) recently said, "this is an issue of conscience more than anything else.....It's the most difficult challenge I feel as a Senator from my state."

Legislation to curb carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gas emissions has been introduced in both the House and Senate, including the Climate Stewardship Act of 2005 (S.342 and H.R. 759), the Clean Power Act of 2005 (S. 150), and three bills to promote climate change technology deployment (S. 386, S. 387, and S. 388) in the U.S. and developing countries.

**The briefing is open to the public and no reservations are required. Please feel free to forward this notice.** For more information, please contact Fred Beck at 202/662-1892 or [fbeck@eesi.org](mailto:fbeck@eesi.org).