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IN THE CITY OF NEW YORK
THE EARTH INSTITUTE

July 31, 2008

Office of Governor Jim Gibbons
State Capitol
101 N. Carson Street
Carson City, NV 89701

Dear Gov. Gibbons,

I last wrote to you in April during my visit to Nevada as the recipient of an award from the Desert Research Institute. At the time, I asked you, as a fellow parent and grandparent, to use your authority as governor to block plans for construction of three new coal-fired power plants in your state out of concern for the numerous threats posed by global warming. Your leadership on this front, I wrote, would not only cut greenhouse gas emissions and help protect your constituents from the worst impacts of global warming but also would set the state on course for a prosperous clean energy future.

Earlier this week, you were presented with a set of recommendations by the global warming task force that you appointed last year. I now feel compelled to write to you again, this time to ask you to reject the heart of the committee's policy proposals as utterly ineffective in achieving the goals that you established for it.

You specifically directed the Climate Change Advisory Committee to find ways to "*reduce greenhouse gas emissions*." Period. Unfortunately, after a year of work, the final recommendations the committee presented to you do not do that at all. In fact, they actually promote *increased* emissions of carbon dioxide, relying on semantic trickery rather than legitimate action to dupe the public into believing the recommendations are real steps forward.

To be clear, some of the recommendations put together by your committee will make minor improvements in energy efficiency and others will help expand Nevada's portfolio of wind, solar and geothermal energy. Steps should be taken to ensure that policies supporting those ideas are implemented. But taken as a whole, these minor initiatives are overshadowed by the recommendations' frightening dearth of creativity, their unmistakable kowtowing to the utility industry, and their complete lack of vision for what is best for Nevada, the nation and the planet.

Most troubling is the committee's support of greenhouse gas "intensity" as the proper metric for reducing CO₂ emissions. This idea couldn't be more transparently in support of building new

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coal-fired power plants in Nevada had it been written directly by the utilities – which, considering the backgrounds of some prominent members of your task force, seems to be precisely the case.

The idea of reducing “intensity” is nonsense stolen straight from the playbook of the Bush Administration and the coal and utility industries, who concocted the idea as a way to continue emitting millions of tons of CO₂ while selling the public on the image that they take global warming seriously. This trick, in fact, allows a vast expansion of Nevada’s coal-fired generating capacity and overall greenhouse gas emissions.

This is completely contrary to the imperatives dictated by the most rigorous science. We do not need to cut the amount of carbon dioxide emitted *per capita*, or *per megawatt-hour* or *per dollar of economic output*. We must dramatically and immediately reduce the absolute amount of greenhouse gases we are pumping into the atmosphere far below current levels. Any measure that allows for an increase, such as the empty recommendations proposed by your task force, is dangerously ill-advised.

The threats of global warming are real and sweeping, and some of the impacts are already being seen in Nevada. As your climate committee itself recognized, scientists anticipate higher temperatures leading to increased heat sickness and more ozone pollution. There will be significant impacts to Nevada’s water resources due to drought and decreased snowfall. There will be more wildfires and more smoke.

Recently, the U.S. Department of Agriculture – not exactly a banner-waving voice on global warming – released a report saying that in the next several decades we can expect to see much of the state’s arid lands shift to desert, and the health of forests and fisheries will decline as temperatures increase.

The only feasible way to achieve the necessary reductions in carbon emissions is to stop burning coal. Accepting your stated goal of *reducing* Nevada’s GHG emissions as genuine, it should be patently clear that your task force’s recommendations make no sense, and you should reject them as woefully inadequate.

The solution for Nevada and the rest of the country is to move away from fossil fuels, particularly coal, and build up the solar, wind and geothermal energy sources that exist in copious amounts in Nevada. Your state has the potential to be a real leader in the nation’s march toward clean energy, but if you buy into the deficient recommendations offered by your climate committee, you will lock Nevada out of much of that potential.

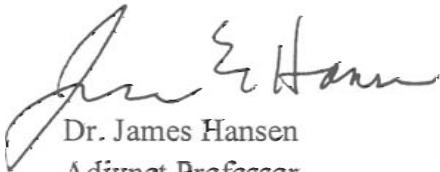
You gave your committee a clear and unmistakable task; find ways to *reduce* greenhouse gas emissions. Unfortunately, the committee chose not to address this challenge in any meaningful

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way. We need leadership now, Gov. Gibbons, and I am again asking you to provide it by seeing past the ruse of "intensity" and instead pushing Nevada to adopt policies aimed at real reductions in GHG emissions, including a ban on the construction of new coal-fired power projects.

In doing so, you will not only be safeguarding your state for generations to come, but you also will be securing Nevada's status as a leader in a newer, cleaner energy world.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Jim Hansen", written in a cursive style.

Dr. James Hansen
Adjunct Professor
Columbia University Earth Institute