

**VIEWPOINTS**

## Let N.J. lead war on global warming

Anytime a problem has the word "global" in it, it's easy to be frightened off.

A global problem is too big for us to impact here at the local level, right?

Some New Jersey leaders recognize that global warming is the product of countless local decisions.

So it's completely appropriate — and necessary — for us to address the problem locally.

Gov. Jon Corzine recently signed an executive order requiring the N.J. Department of Environmental Protection to draft a comprehensive plan within six months to cut state-wide pollution that causes global warming 20 percent by 2020 and 80 percent by 2050.

Legislators then drafted the Global Warming Response Act to turn the governor's order into law and, for the first time in legislative history, held a round of hearings to gather input from scientists, environmentalists, energy producers and members of the public on how New Jersey can do its part to reduce and maybe someday reverse global warming.

California is the only state to adopt mandatory, scientifically based caps on the emissions that contribute to global warming.

If we become the second, New Jersey could be a leader in curbing global warming emissions and help turn up the pressure on the federal government to get serious about the problem.

The Global Warming Response Act — A3301/S2114 — would establish a program by January 2008 that would reduce greenhouse gas emissions, specifically carbon dioxide.

By 2020, the program would reduce greenhouse gas emissions to below the levels we had in 1990.

Even the energy producers represented at the hearings conceded something has to be done.

William Walsh Jr., director of corporate issues for Public Service Electric & Gas, testified that "global warming is a fact. The debate these days is focused on what should be done to limit greenhouse gases and not on whether action is required."

But why should New Jersey stick its neck out on an issue like global warming?

For starters, global warming has been linked to increased flooding, which would have negative impacts on safety, property and the environment across the state.

Shore areas are particularly vulnerable.

If the sea level rises 2 feet to 4 feet, scientists estimate 1 percent to 3 percent of the state will become permanently flooded.

New Jersey's four coastal counties — Ocean, Monmouth, Atlantic and Cape May — account for more than 70 percent of the state's tourism, one of New Jersey's top three industries.

Frequent or permanent flooding would damage the ecosystem, and potentially destroy the shore's tourism economy.

In addition, the same pollution that causes global warming has been linked to other problems that are on the rise in New Jersey.

For example, air pollution aggravates asthma in seniors and children.

Other impacts of global warming include increased chance of forest fires, loss of endangered species and the rise of micro-organisms in our oceans that pose health risks.

There are many resources out there for anyone who wants to know more about the effects of global warming and the best ways to address the problem.

The advocacy organization Environment New Jersey is a great place to start; you can contact them at (609) 392-5151, or visit their Web site at [www.environmentnewjersey.org](http://www.environmentnewjersey.org).

We need to work together to stop global warming before it does more damage to our state.

The governor and the Legislature should be applauded for taking up the subject.

Now let's urge them to adopt the Global Warming Response Act.



### The State We're In

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