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A N T H R O P O L O G I C A L
A S S O C I A T I O N

May 4, 2009

House Committee on Energy and Commerce
U.S. House of Representatives
2125 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Mr. Chairman:

The American Anthropological Association (AAA)—a professional organization of over 11,000 anthropologists committed to the promotion and protection of the right of people everywhere to the full realization of their humanity—is writing to ask that the House Committee on Energy and Commerce support energy and climate-change legislation that reduces greenhouse gas emissions and accelerates the carbon-reduction timeline established by the current administration.

Legislation that helps moderate climate change is vital to preserving cultures, both past and present. Global warming threatens to disrupt the realization of a range of human rights, particularly those concerning life, health, food, water, housing, and self-determination.¹ Anthropologists are deeply concerned about the pending humanitarian disaster that could result from unchecked climate change, particularly amongst small island nations. These nations, including several U.S. territories, are highly susceptible to the effects of global warming (e.g. rising seas, erosion, extreme weather events, etc.), which threatens to uproot island and coastal populations, creating millions of refugees. In 2005, the flooding of Bhola Island in Bangladesh forced the migration of 500,000 people. Inhabitants of New Guinea, Tuvalu, and other South Pacific nations have also been forced to relocate due to climate change. These numbers are expected to vastly increase throughout the course of this century if immediate action is not taken.

Global warming also poses a danger to thousands of archaeological sites, threatening to wash away the historical record of humanity. These sites are not a renewable resource, and, as one of the heaviest producers of greenhouse gases in the world, the U.S. needs to take the lead in reducing its carbon footprint, stemming climate change, and protecting the world's cultural resources.

We understand the complications of adopting clean energy policies during these dire economic times, but urge you to consider the human legacy that stands to be lost if our nation fails to adopt a new energy strategy. We thank you for your prompt attention to this matter and ask that you follow up with Mr. Damon Dozier, AAA Director of Public Affairs. He can be reached at (703)528-1902 extension 1163 or ddozier@aaanet.org.

¹ UN Human Rights Council, 10th session. *Report of the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights on the relationship between climate change and human rights*. A/HRC/10/61, 15 January 2009.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Victoria Sanford', written in a cursive style.

Victoria Sanford
AAA Committee for Human Rights, Chair

cc: The Honorable Steven Chu
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The Honorable Jeff Bingaman
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The Honorable Hillary R. Clinton
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