

Walker Grimshaw

Attachment 1

The primary reason given for rejecting the five paragraphs of the standards in question is that they do not teach both sides of the argument and, as Senator Thayne has said, that they were “political statements”. I would like to clarify that there is no argument as to the correlation between carbon dioxide concentration in the atmosphere and the mean temperature of the earth. There is also no argument as to whether or not humans are emitting carbon dioxide into the atmosphere, primarily through the combustion of fossil fuels. Thus, the only argument is what impact the precipitous increase in carbon dioxide concentration and mean earth temperature since the industrial revolution has on humans and the environment. Yet the house removed section ESS3-MS-3 from the science standards, which states that “changes to Earth’s environments can have different impacts (negative and positive) for different living things”. This is an explicit statement that there are two sides to the impacts of climate change that will allow students to reach conclusions based on a full body of evidence. The standards encourage discussion of the possible positive impacts of increasing carbon dioxide levels, such as increased plant growth. They also encourage an understanding of the negative impacts, such as increased droughts, unreliability of rain that farmers need to supply food to an ever increasing population, and rising sea levels that directly threaten millions of people living on small islands and our productive coastal cities. Climate change may allow some crops to grow in environments where they previously could not, but it will also displace entire nations that can no longer survive on subsistence farming. Climate change need not be an issue solely for environmentalists and solely against the fossil fuel industry. The standards as written no more villainize the fossil fuel industry than volcanic activity, which they explicitly mention as a contributing force on global temperatures. The standards as written make no reference to political or government actions with respect to climate change; they are simply not political statements. An understanding of the human impact on climate change and how climate change impacts us is a vital part of education in our state’s schools. Please do not make it political.