

**Hearing of the  
Committee on Oversight and Government Reform  
United States House of Representatives**

**Statement of Philip A. Cooney**

**Rayburn House Office Building  
March 19, 2007**

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before the  
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Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Davis and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for inviting me to appear before you today. I welcome the opportunity to respond to your questions concerning the conduct of my duties in my prior job as Chief of Staff of the White House Council on Environmental Quality ("CEQ"). I recognize the important work of this committee to ensure that our government is operating efficiently and properly in performing its valuable work on behalf the American people. I want to assure you of my cooperation toward your achieving that end.

I have read many of the same media reports you have concerning my work at the Council. I hope to shed light today on the established interagency processes surrounding the development of various Executive Branch reports on important budgetary and research challenges facing our society -- including those concerning global climate change. I will try to respond fully to your questions surrounding my participation in those processes and my recollection of the factors that motivated my actions.

Today, more than anything else, I hope to convey to the committee that I held myself to a high standard of integrity in the performance of my duties in the Administration, consistent with my conscience and personal values of honor and public service. In each day that I served over four years, I worked very hard to advance the Administration's stated goals and policies. I believed that those policies were grounded strongly in rationality and rooted in a commitment to serving the best interests of the American people.

The Committee has reviewed tens of thousands of pages of documents in its investigation, many of which have been publicly released pursuant to the Freedom of Information Act petitions that were filed both during and after my service. From that review, it is clear that the volume of material that I handled in my job was enormous. I do not think it would be an exaggeration to say that I received 200 e-mails on many days and that I may have sent 75. On many evenings, I brought home draft testimony and other documents to review. But as you and members of your staffs know well, that is the nature of government service; it comes with long hours and many responsibilities, even as it presents the honor to serve one's fellow citizens and country.

I tried to do the best job that I could during my four years of service in the Administration. To the extent that I am able, I hope to provide you with more complete information to aid your understanding of specific communications or projects.

I would like to highlight four points:

**1. My reviews of federal budgetary and research planning documents on climate change were guided by the President's stated strategy and research priorities, as set forth in his June 11, 2001 speech on the subject and Chapter 3 of the Policy Book that accompanied it. (Enclosed; also at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2001/06/climatechange.pdf>.)** I joined the White House staff two weeks later. The President's policy itself was guided by a National Academy of Sciences ("NAS") report that his cabinet-level committee on climate change had specifically requested at that time, which was completed and presented in early June 2001, entitled "Climate Change Science: An Analysis of Some Key Questions." That report concluded, among other things, in the Summary at page 5 -- and I would like to emphasize this point:

**"Making progress in reducing the large uncertainties in projections of future climate will require addressing a number of fundamental scientific questions relating to the buildup of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere and the behavior of the climate system."**

The NAS Report itemized those uncertainties and questions which later guided the Administration's prioritization of federally-sponsored research to improve our scientific understanding and better inform policymakers. Let me make clear as this committee addresses my reviews of climate change policy documents that a number of my specific interagency review comments were verbatim quotes from the NAS study above -- a fact some critics do not recognize.

**2. The documents that I reviewed as part of a well-established interagency review process were not a platform for the presentation of original scientific research.** Mr. Piltz, who appeared before your committee in January, described his role as that of an "editor" of summaries received from agencies as they related to various budget and planning reports, and clarified that he himself is not a scientist. The White House Office of Management and Budget ("OMB") then subjected Mr. Piltz' drafts to formal, interagency review and comment by many others, including the multiple federal agencies themselves, and relevant White House offices, including mine. OMB's review was then subjected to a final review and approval by Dr. Mahoney, who served as the Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere, and the Director of the Climate Change Science Program.

Dr. Mahoney testified before Congress about this process in July 2005 and confirmed that he had the final word on the final content of these documents. Attached are Dr. Mahoney's written responses to Senate questions describing that process and stating "**...the edits by CEQ did not misstate any scientific fact.**" Moreover, many comments, including mine, were not incorporated in final reports, as Mr. Piltz stated in January and in an interview he gave in June 2005.





