

The Honorable Albert Gore  
The Carthage Group  
2100 Westend Avenue, Suite 620  
Nashville, TN 37203

March 20, 2007

Dear Mr. Vice President:

As co-chairs of the bipartisan Joint Ocean Commission Initiative, which is focused on addressing the challenges facing our nation's oceans, coasts and Great Lakes, we are seeking your assistance in our effort to highlight the role of oceans in climate change. Your leadership role in helping foster a new stewardship ethic in our nation and personal commitment to addressing major environmental issues facing our planet, including global climate change, has resulted in a new level of individual and collective awareness and concern.

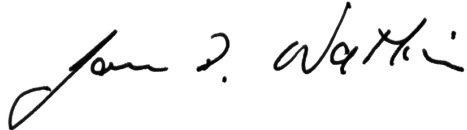
We strongly support your effort and are working through our Joint Initiative to enhance awareness of the oceans role in climate change. Through their capacity to absorb and transport heat and carbon dioxide, oceans are a key driver of climate change processes. In addition, they are also undergoing significant short and long-term change over both large and small areas as evidenced by increasing acidification of the oceans, climatic shifts associated with El Niño, dramatic changes in the amount of sea ice in the Arctic Ocean, rising sea level rise, and concern about possible abrupt climatic and ecological changes, particularly associated with shifts in ocean circulation.

Unfortunately, chronic underfunding of ocean-related science has prevented us from capitalizing on new technology and innovative ideas that would help address huge information gaps and significantly advance our understanding of the dynamic relationship between oceans and the atmosphere. Improved understanding of these processes will greatly enhance our ability to predict the economic and ecological ramifications associated with climate change. This information will be essential as state, regions, and nations balance competing demands in the development of policies to minimize and adapt to climate changes in the coming years and decades.

Developing coherent strategies for adapting to a changing environment will be as important as efforts to address future carbon emissions. We have discussed this matter with key leaders in Congress, the Administration, and the scientific community, and they are all in agreement. In a recent meeting with Senator Boxer, she indicated that you would be testifying before her committee and asked that we reach out to you in the hope that you would address the role of the oceans, as both a driver and a victim, of climate change in your statement.

We are prepared to provide you with background information, access to experts in the ocean community, as well as draft text if you determine that such assistance would help strengthen your argument regarding the need for immediate action on climate change. We will follow-up this letter with call, and your staff may contact Joint Initiative staff at (202) 354-6444 for additional information or support.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "James D. Watkins". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "J" and "W".

James D. Watkins  
Admiral, U.S. Navy (Retired)  
Chairman, U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Leon E. Panetta". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "L" and "P".

The Honorable Leon E. Panetta  
Chair, Pew Oceans Commission