

Comment on: 'The ticking time bomb on warming' at 10/27/2009 3:10 AM EDT

For those who are still not certain, and find some of the "scientific" arguments against global warming convincing, consider this:

Would the most respected scientific organizations on the planet endorse a theory which could be refuted by such simple, obvious arguments? Do you really think they didn't think of all that stuff?

Google the statements of NAS and AAAS on climate change. Those are the two most respected scientific organizations in the world. While you're at it, google "MIT climate change" or "NASA climate change" or whatever your preferred scientific organization.

They all say very close to the same thing: global warming is real, it's a serious problem, we're doing it, and we need to stop.

The AAAS and 17 other highly respected scientific organizations just sent a letter to the senate confirming the scientific consensus on climate change:

http://www.aaas.org/news/releases/2009/1021climate_letter.shtml

Relevant quote:

"Observations throughout the world make it clear that climate change is occurring, and rigorous scientific research demonstrates that the greenhouse gases emitted by human activities are the primary driver. These conclusions are based on multiple independent lines of evidence, and contrary assertions are inconsistent with an objective assessment of the vast body of peer-reviewed science."

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The rest of the arguments presented in this thread against global warming are similarly mythical. Most of these points were completely understood and dismissed by climate scientists decades ago. If you're interested, you can read scientific counter-arguments in many places:

<http://www.realclimate.org/index.php/archives/2004/12/index/#Responses>

http://scienceblogs.com/illconsidered/2008/07/how_to_talk_to_a_sceptic.php

<http://www.newscientist.com/article/dn11462>

<http://www.skepticalscience.com/>

And, for the more visually inclined, there is a great series of videos called the "Climate Denial Crock of the Week:"

<http://www.youtube.com/profile?user=greenman3610#g/u>

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2) Solar cycles. This is another common myth, which like many myths has a kernel of truth to it.

There is a regular solar radiation cycle. It does affect the climate. However, if you subtract the solar cycle effect from the temperature data, there is still a clear warming trend. It is an 11-year cycle. It does nothing to explain the decades-long warming trend we've seen.

Some people will show you graphs that match the solar sunspot cycle data to the temperature data. It's important to notice that these graphs cut off at 1975, because after that, the apparent correlation completely breaks down. The sunspot activity goes one way, the temperature goes the other way. So yeah, if you ignore the last 30 years, you might think sunspots are controlling the climate, but they do not explain the dramatic warming we've seen especially over the last couple of decades.

In fact scientists have used data about the influence of solar cycles to calculate the effect of CO2 more accurately, and they conclude that CO2 does indeed cause warming.

There is a very good video on this here which explains the science in a way that's easy to understand:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_Sf_UIQYc20

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All of the pseudoscientific arguments presented here against global warming theory have been completely debunked by scientists. I'll do a couple of them here and then give you links to look up the rest if you're interested.

1) Global cooling. This is a common myth. In fact the temperatures are still going up, and there is no cooling trend. See this AP article:

<http://www.ajc.com/news/nation-world/ap-impact-statisticians-reject-174088.html>

The AP, in a rare show of real journalism, gave the temperature data to professional statisticians without telling them what the data was, and asked them for a statistical analysis. The result: there is a clear, significant warming trend. The last decade has been the hottest decade on record, and the trend is continuing to go up.

Relevant quote: "'To talk about global cooling at the end of the hottest decade the planet has experienced in many thousands of years is ridiculous,' said Ken Caldeira, a climate scientist at the Carnegie Institution at Stanford."

The global cooling myth originated because 1998 was a record high year due to El Nino. Short-term fluctuations like that are to be expected. Nonetheless, the overall trend is up, as you can see for yourself if you look at the data:

<http://data.giss.nasa.gov/gistemp/graphs/>

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Great article.

From an environmentalist perspective, there are a lot of things wrong with this bill. A carbon tax would be better, as it would provide a financial incentive for greater emissions cuts. Offsets are a scam. The bill's targets are not nearly aggressive enough. It is in many ways a giveaway to big industry.

It's still a heck of a lot better than nothing, which is why I think environmentalists should compromise and support it. It gets us off the business as usual scenario, which science clearly shows carries catastrophic risks. It provides a framework for reducing emissions. It encourages development of alternative energy.

Furthermore, it shows that we have the political will to tackle this issue, which is crucial with the Copenhagen summit coming up.

It's not nearly enough, but it's a start, and we'll take it.
