

First steps: Church members pressing the nation to change

by [John Buchanan](#) in the [February 20, 2007](#) issue

As this issue of the magazine was being prepared, the House Committee on Oversight and Governmental Reform was holding a hearing on the way the Bush administration has treated the issue of climate change. The administration has not been very interested in the topic, and until recently didn't allow the phrase to be uttered. Witnesses at the hearing testified that government officials had "delayed, altered or watered down the findings of governmental scientists."

Drew Shindell, a NASA scientist, reported on his research finding which indicates that Antarctica may be warming more rapidly than anyone anticipated. When his report was published, he said, he found that the conclusions had been "watered down" and references to rapid warming "deleted by the government." Several other witnesses provided similar testimony.

Francesca Grifo, director of the Union of Concerned Scientists, testified about a survey of federal climate scientists. The survey revealed that it was common for scientists' work "to be changed to misrepresent their findings, and for climate-related material to disappear from their Web sites." Almost 60 percent of the government scientists surveyed reported that they had "personally experienced such an incident in the last five years."

Congress hears constantly from lobbyists representing the most profitable multinational corporations. Those corporations cite their own scientists in order to challenge research on global warming. Environmental lobbyists do not have the resources to play the game at that level. Bill McKibben ("[Meltdown](#)") cites Senator John McCain's observation during his unsuccessful effort to pass a very modest environmental bill: "Until enough citizens who are voters care, then these special interests will be able to block any meaningful policy change. It's as simple as that."

Instead of wringing our hands, McKibben wants us to do something. He is helping to organize hundreds of simultaneous rallies on April 14, the Saturday after Easter, to

urge Congress to “Cut Carbon 80% by 2050.” Some of those rallies should be on church steps, McKibben says, “because politicians pay attention to people on church steps.”

Church members gathered on the steps to speak out on an issue of life and death importance to the world—it’s incarnational! Deep in our tradition is reverence for creation: “The Earth is the Lord’s.” Devoted environmentalists have struggled to be taken seriously and have fought the good fight. It’s time for people of faith to join them, acknowledging that global warming is one of the most critical issues facing us and pressing the nation to change the way it thinks and acts. I’m planning to get organized for April 14 and put some people on the church steps.