

ASSESSING TRADE AND BUSINESS GROUPS' POSITIONS ON CLIMATE CHANGE



Union of Concerned Scientists
Citizens and Scientists for Environmental Solutions

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Gretchen Goldman
Paul Rogerson

The Center for Science and Democracy
at the Union of Concerned Scientists

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Union of Concerned Scientists
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Gretchen Goldman is an analyst at the Center for Science and Democracy at UCS. She holds a Ph.D. in environmental engineering from the Georgia Institute of Technology.

Paul Rogerson is a research assistant at the Center for Science and Democracy at UCS. He holds an M.Sc. in cognitive neuroscience from University College London.

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The opinions expressed in this report are solely the responsibility of the authors.



Citizens and Scientists for Environmental Solutions

**Union of
Concerned
Scientists**

National Headquarters

2 Brattle Square
Cambridge, MA 02138-3780
Phone: (617) 547-5552
Fax: (617) 864-9405

Washington, DC, Office

1825 K St. NW, Ste. 800
Washington, DC 20006-1232
Phone: (202) 223-6133
Fax: (202) 223-6162

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Trade and business associations have represented commercial interests in the United States since before the American Revolution, and they have helped build the nation's industries (Mack 1991). These associations provide many advantages to member companies, including industry standards and agreements, economic services, and access to information and shared resources. In addition, over the past three decades national trade and business associations have increasingly focused on government relations. In 1970, fewer than 20 percent of them were headquartered in Washington, DC (Mack 1991), but today the majority have a significant presence there. Many trade and business associations consider government relations to be their primary purpose (Boléat 2003).

Thus trade and business associations offer significant benefits to companies that wish to influence public policy. By bringing together firms with similar interests, these associations allow industries to speak to decision makers in a more unified and powerful voice. Pooling resources means that dedicated association staff can closely track, and consistently represent, their group's interests in federal policy making.

The regulation of heat-trapping gases, as well as the physical effects of climate change, could significantly affect the private sector—both positively and negatively. In view of the business community's vested interest in policy debates on how to address climate change, many associations now actively engage in climate policy discussions.

Because of the complexity of climate change and the broad range of its effects, companies have different stakes in, and approaches to influencing, climate policy. As a result, it is common for associations to take policy positions on climate that may not represent all of their members' views or even those of their boards of directors. This is especially true of umbrella groups, such as the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and National Association of Manufacturers, which represent multiple industries with diverse interests. Moreover, some trade and business associations have been inconsistent in their positions on climate-related issues over time.

The regulation of heat-trapping gases, as well as the physical effects of climate change, could significantly affect the private sector—both positively and negatively.

Thus company leadership may not agree with their association's policy positions on climate change. In fact, our previous research suggests that many companies have board seats on associations that hold climate change positions in direct opposition to their own (UCS 2012). While this earlier UCS work analyzed climate-related actions taken by individual companies, the present report reflects our ongoing investigations of trade and business associations' role in the public conversation on climate change.

CHAPTER 2

Research Methods

To help companies understand where their trade and business associations stand, we assessed the positions that 14 associations have taken on climate science and policy in the United States between 2007 and 2012. These groups were chosen on the basis of their national prominence and level of activity in the public climate change dialogue, with particular attention paid to groups in the energy sector. Our sources of information included:

- Interviews with association staff
- Website materials
- Official statements on third-party social media pages
- Executives' statements to the news media
- Congressional testimony
- Public comments on greenhouse gas regulations proposed by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
- Statements on the 2009 Waxman-Markey American Clean Energy and Security Act

Using these sources, we evaluated associations in three areas:

Acceptance of Climate Science

We examined whether or not associations have demonstrated an acceptance of basic climate science as a foundation on which to discuss climate change policies. Associations that made statements misrepresenting the consensus of climate scientists were labeled *no* and colored *red* in the graphics in Chapter 3; groups that made accurate statements in this regard were labeled *yes* and colored *green*.

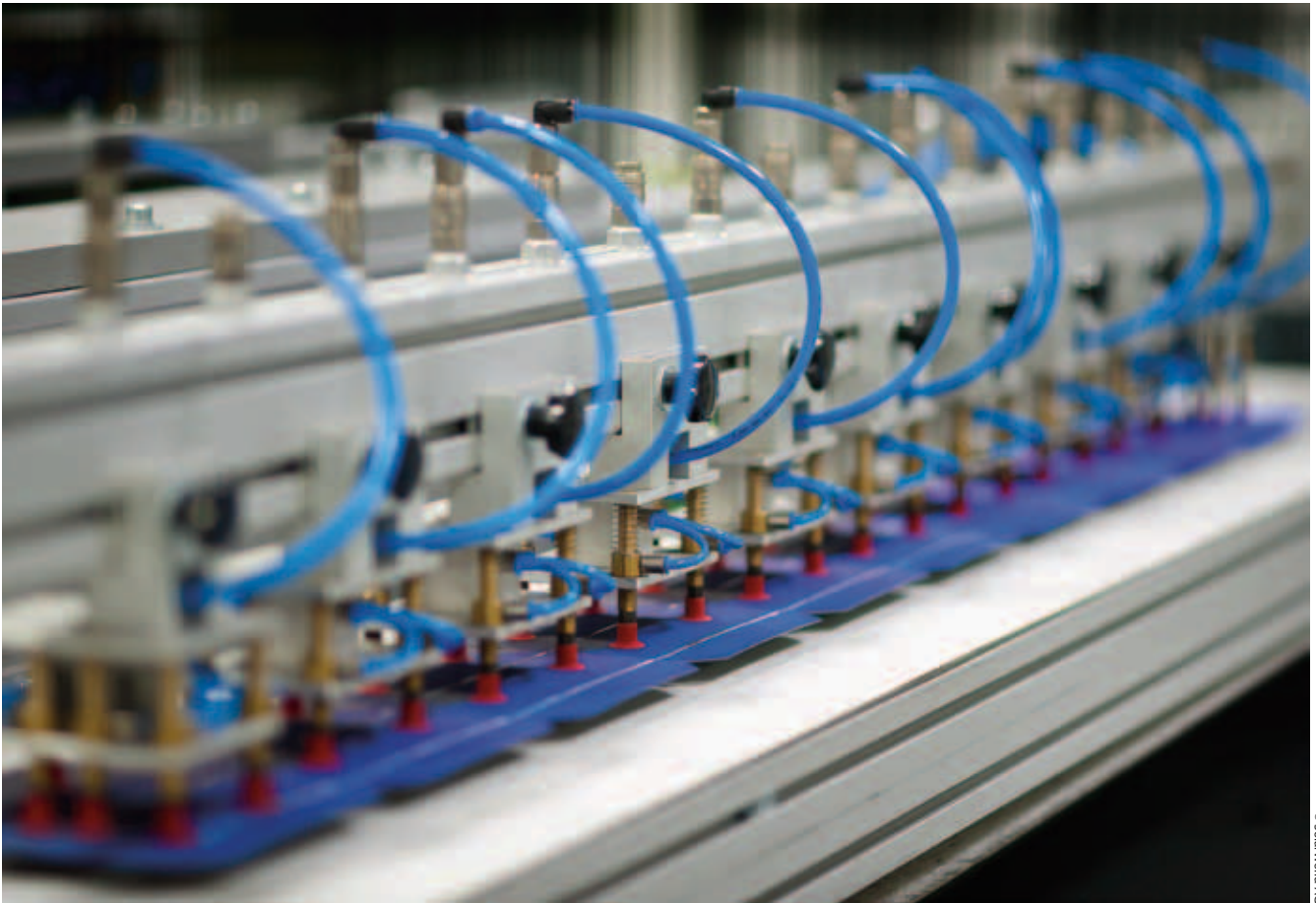
Support for Climate Action

Associations discuss climate change in the context of the policy goals they favor. Groups that supported clear and substantial overall emissions-reduction goals, such as “dramatic emissions reductions” or “80 percent emissions reduction by 2050,” were labeled *yes* and colored *green*. By contrast, associations that stated more qualified and vague goals—for example, that they would only embrace a comprehensive climate policy if it were “global in scope and did not damage the economy” or if it included a benefit to their industry—were labeled *limited* and colored *yellow* to indicate lessened but not entirely absent support. None of the 14 associations we researched publicly expressed opposition to all policy action on climate change.

We examined whether or not associations have demonstrated an acceptance of basic climate science as a foundation on which to discuss climate change policies.

Policy Endorsement

Our previous work suggests that corporate actors that voice support for policy goals to address climate change, as described above, may or may not choose, in actuality, to endorse specific policies that achieve those goals when they are proposed (UCS 2012). We addressed this distinction by analyzing associations' support of either of two national climate policies that were proposed



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Climate change stands to affect the interests of businesses on multiple fronts. Thus many trade associations—especially those in the energy sector—are actively engaged in climate policy discussions.

in the last five years and that had a reasonable chance of being implemented: (1) the Waxman-Markey American Clean Energy and Security Act of 2009 (H.R. 2454) and (2) the Environmental Protection Agency's regulation of greenhouse gases under the Clean Air Act (including the EPA's finding that greenhouse gases endanger public health and welfare, as well as the agency's subsequent regulatory proposals). Groups that endorsed either proposal were labeled *yes* and groups that did not support them were labeled *not yet*. Diverse policy tools are available to address climate change, and there are many reasons why associations may or may not choose to support a given policy; therefore declining to support either proposal is not necessarily a

True support for climate action ultimately means endorsement of actual proposed policies.

negative action. Rather, a label of *not yet* indicates that there has yet to be a broad national policy for which an association has demonstrated endorsement. For that reason, while associations with a *yes* are colored green, those with a *not yet* are not colored at all. Note, however, no policy will be perfect and true support for climate action ultimately means endorsement of actual proposed policies.

CHAPTER 3 Where Associations Stand

The figures on the following pages show the degree to which 14 U.S. trade and business associations have expressed support for climate science and policy in three categories: acceptance of the science, support for climate action, and policy endorsement. Each characterization is accompanied by one or more representative quotes reflecting the group’s position in that category. Thus our

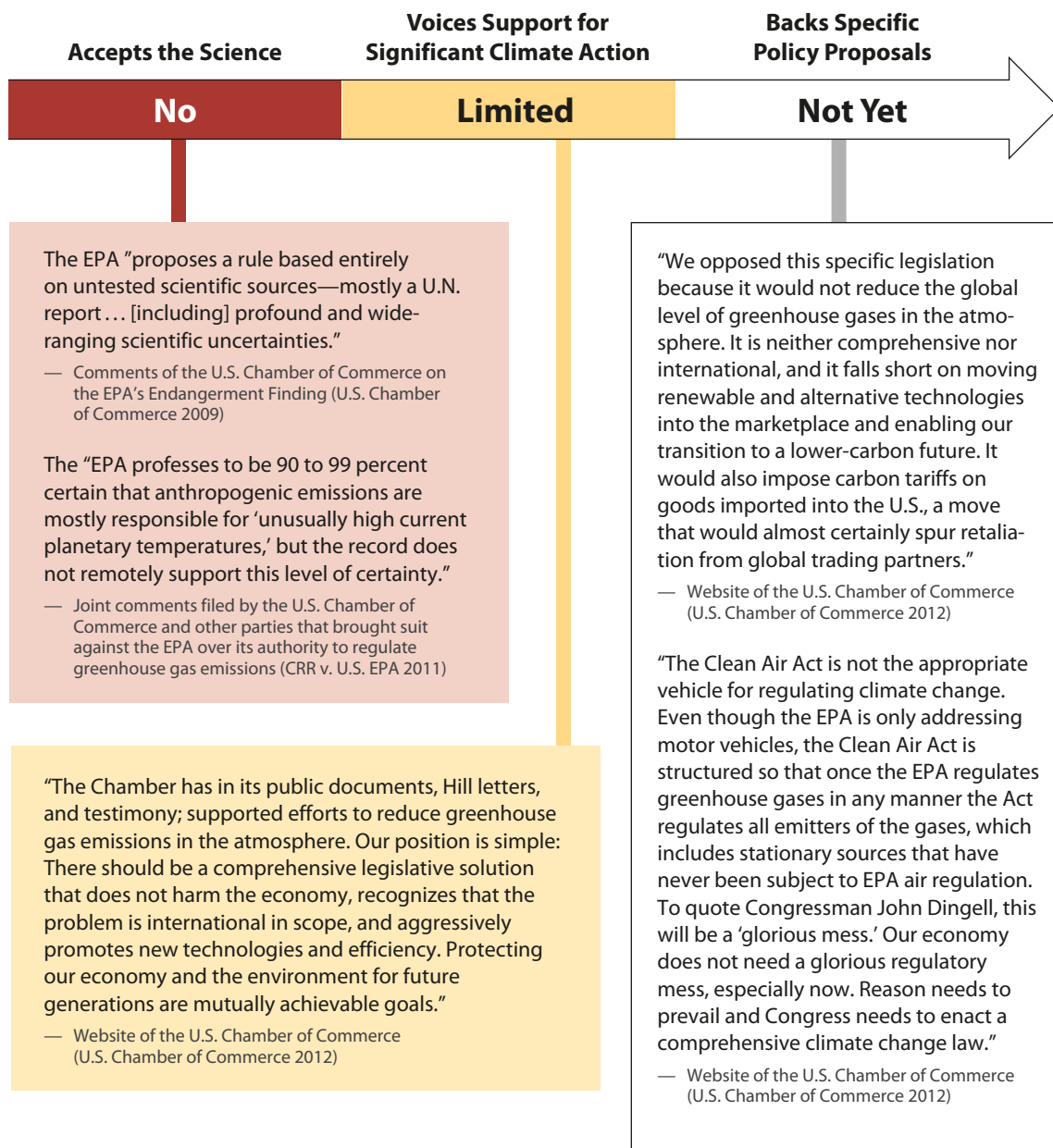
Our analysis presents the “track records” of 14 associations’ positions on climate change.

analysis presents the “track records” of the 14 associations’ positions on climate change based on information from the last five years.

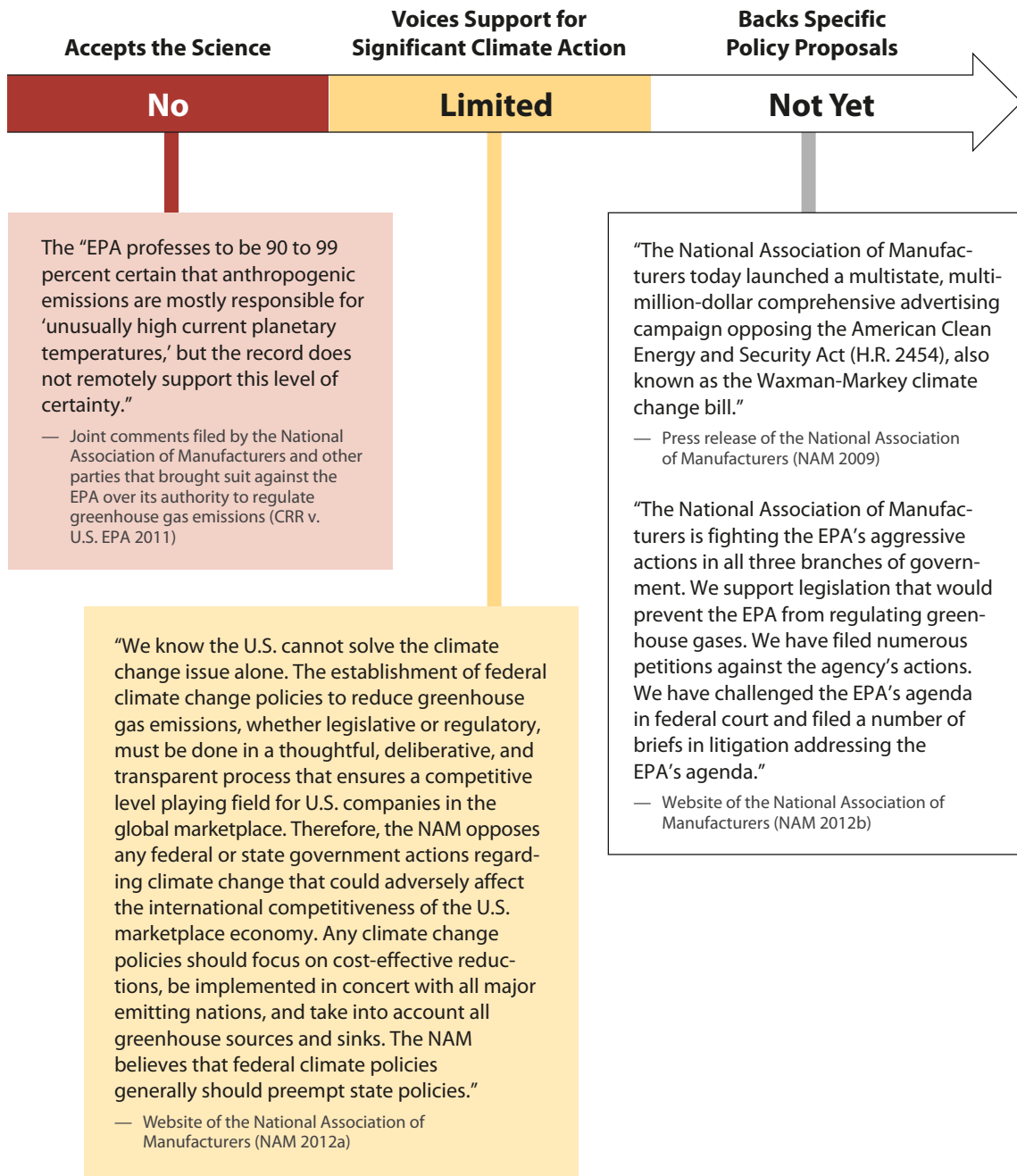


The U.S. Chamber of Commerce is one of the largest associations in the United States. The group has been a prominent actor in the conversation on climate science and policy through its statements, materials, and political and legal activities.

U.S. Chamber of Commerce on Climate Science and Policy



National Association of Manufacturers (NAM) on Climate Science and Policy



American Petroleum Institute (API) on Climate Science and Policy



AMERICAN PETROLEUM INSTITUTE



"The major difference between [greenhouse gases] and air toxics is that there is no local effect with climate change, if there is any effect at all."

— Howard Feldman, regulatory and scientific affairs director at the American Petroleum Institute (Harder 2012)

The "EPA professes to be 90 to 99 percent certain that anthropogenic emissions are mostly responsible for 'unusually high current planetary temperatures,' but the record does not remotely support this level of certainty."

— Joint comments filed by the American Petroleum Institute and other parties that brought suit against the EPA over its authority to regulate greenhouse gas emissions (CRR v. U.S. EPA 2011)

"[T]he approach taken by the Waxman-Markey bill is so fundamentally flawed that the House should reject it."

— Jack Gerard, president of the American Petroleum Institute (API 2009b)

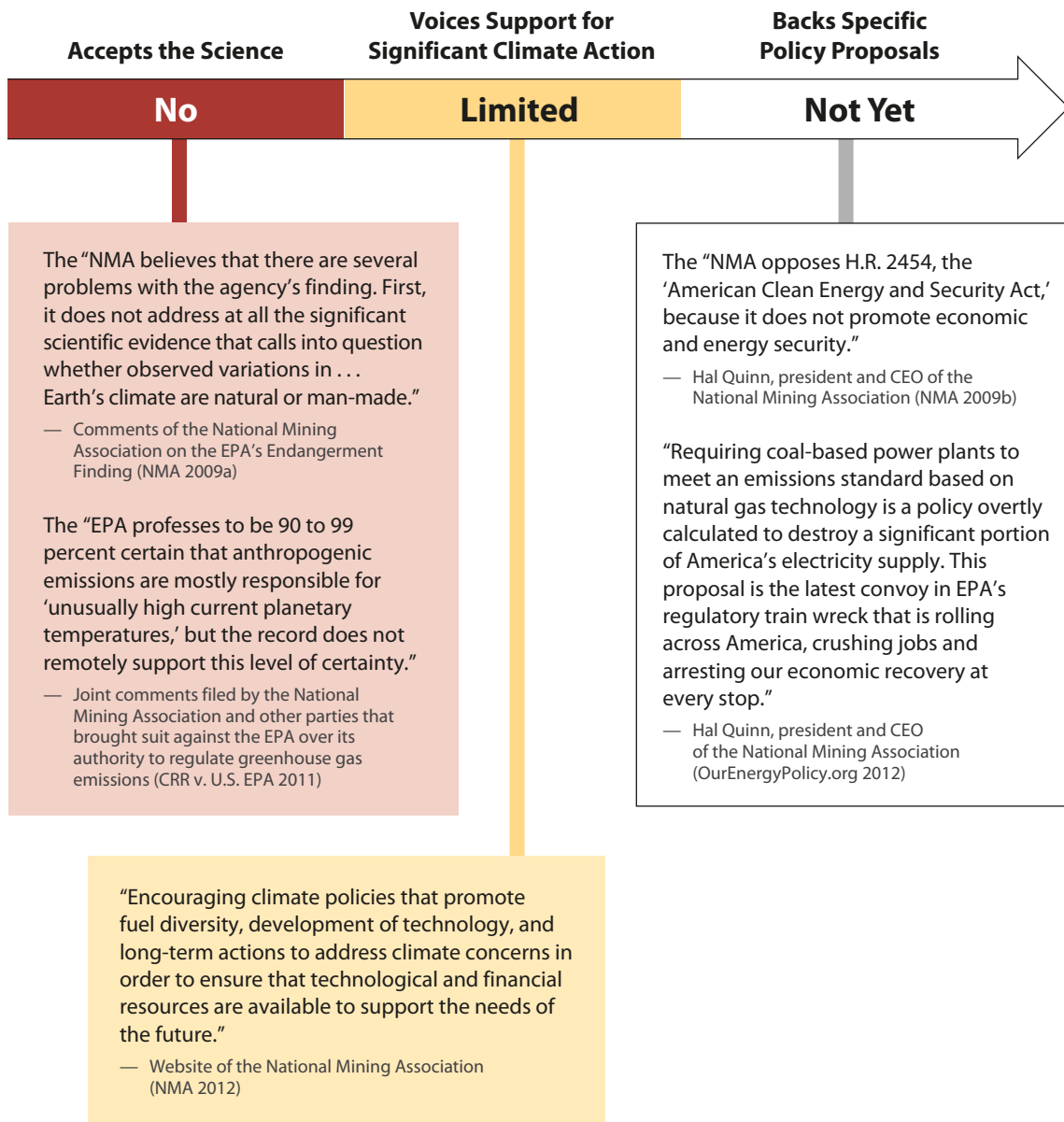
"This action poses a threat to every American family and business if it leads to regulation of greenhouse gases under the Clean Air Act. Such regulation would be intrusive, inefficient, and excessively costly. It could chill job growth and delay business expansion. The Clean Air Act was meant to control traditional air pollution, not greenhouse gases that come from every vehicle, home, factory, and farm in America."

— Press release of the American Petroleum Institute (API 2009b)

"Climate change is a serious issue demanding focused and effective action that is best taken with legislation dedicated to the problem rather than through the existing structure of the CAA [Clean Air Act]."

— Comments of the American Petroleum Institute on the EPA's Endangerment Finding (API 2009a)

National Mining Association (NMA) on Climate Science and Policy



American Coal Council (ACC) on Climate Science and Policy



"The 'hockey stick' graph produced by Michael Mann at Penn State may have suffered the final blow to its credibility. As more original data sets are released to the public and other scientists and statisticians have the opportunity to recreate Mann's work, their findings are lacking the distinct 20th-century uptick in temperatures."

— Jason Hayes, communications director of the American Coal Council (Hayes 2012)

"Senator Inhofe, ranking minority member of the Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works, has just released a damning Senate report titled 'Consensus? Exposed: The CRU Controversy.' [This] report reviews the leaked emails and documents from the East Anglia Climate Research Unit (and the associated 'Climategate' issues). . . . [Senator Inhofe also] claims that the EPA relied on IPCC [U.N. Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change] reports that have now been shown to be based on faulty science."

— Jason Hayes, communications director of the American Coal Council (Hayes 2010)

"We cannot rush to implement a legislative fix for an environmental challenge without also fully considering the potentially destabilizing social and fiscal impacts of that fix. . . . Fatally going our electricity supply . . . will not advance the cause of environmental or human well-being."

— Jason Hayes, communications director of the American Coal Council (Hayes 2009)

"In the near future, the Senate will take up consideration of S.J.Res.26, a [congressional] resolution to disapprove EPA's proposal to regulate greenhouse gases. Our organizations, representing millions of workers in every state of the nation, in every walk of life, across a broad spectrum of the economy from rural communities to the largest cities, urge you to vote in favor of this resolution."

— Letter to Congress signed by the American Coal Council (Agricultural Retailers Association et al. 2010)

"There is no generic or monolithic industry approach to the issue of climate change and, as such, there is no industry-wide take on how to address climate-related concerns."

— Website of the American Coal Council (American Coal Council 2012)

Business Roundtable (BRT) on Climate Science and Policy



“According to leading scientists, there is increasing evidence that . . . Earth’s climate has been warming over the last century and that increases in . . . Earth’s temperature are affecting many global ecosystems, especially [in] the polar areas. At the same time that warming has been occurring, greenhouse gas (GHG) concentrations in the atmosphere have increased due to rising worldwide emissions of GHGs. Major sources of these emissions include the combustion of fossil fuels, tropical deforestation, and other land use changes.

“Because the consequences of global warming for society and ecosystems are potentially serious and far-reaching, steps to address the risks of such warming are prudent even now, while the science continues to evolve.”

— Report released by the Business Roundtable (Business Roundtable 2007)

“Michael Burnham: Just to clarify. So, [the] Business Roundtable has not formerly endorsed the Waxman-Markey bill either?”

“Mike Morris: No, it has not.”

— Mike Morris, chair of the Business Roundtable’s Sustainable Growth Initiative (Business Roundtable 2009)

“America’s business leaders believe in a smarter approach to regulation that takes account of the total burden on jobs and the economy. GHG stationary-source emissions require a legislative solution, not regulations based on a law that was created before the effects of such emissions were understood.”

— John Engler, president of the Business Roundtable (Business Roundtable 2011)

The “Business Roundtable supports collective actions that will lead to the reduction of GHG emissions on a global basis with the goal of slowing increases in GHG concentrations in the atmosphere and ultimately stabilizing them at levels that will address the risks of climate change. . . . Although [the] Business Roundtable supports actions to address global warming, our members have a range of views and preferences about the policy tools that will best achieve that objective. Some companies support mandatory approaches; others do not.”

— Report released by the Business Roundtable (Business Roundtable 2007)

National Solid Wastes Management Association (NSWMA) on Climate Science and Policy



“Earth’s atmosphere is like a greenhouse. Life-sustaining heat is trapped within that atmosphere, while some of the sun’s harmful rays are reflected away. Climatic changes caused by natural cycles have led to ice or glacial ages and periods of intense heat. During the last two decades, scientific studies have shown a significant increase in atmospheric concentrations of greenhouse gases, primarily carbon dioxide generated by burning fossil fuels such as coal and oil. Other greenhouse gases include methane, nitrous oxide, hydrofluorocarbons, perfluorocarbons, and sulfur hexafluoride. Scientific consensus is clear: these emissions are making [E]arth warmer in an unusually fast time period.”

— Website of the Environmental Industry Associations (EIA 2012)

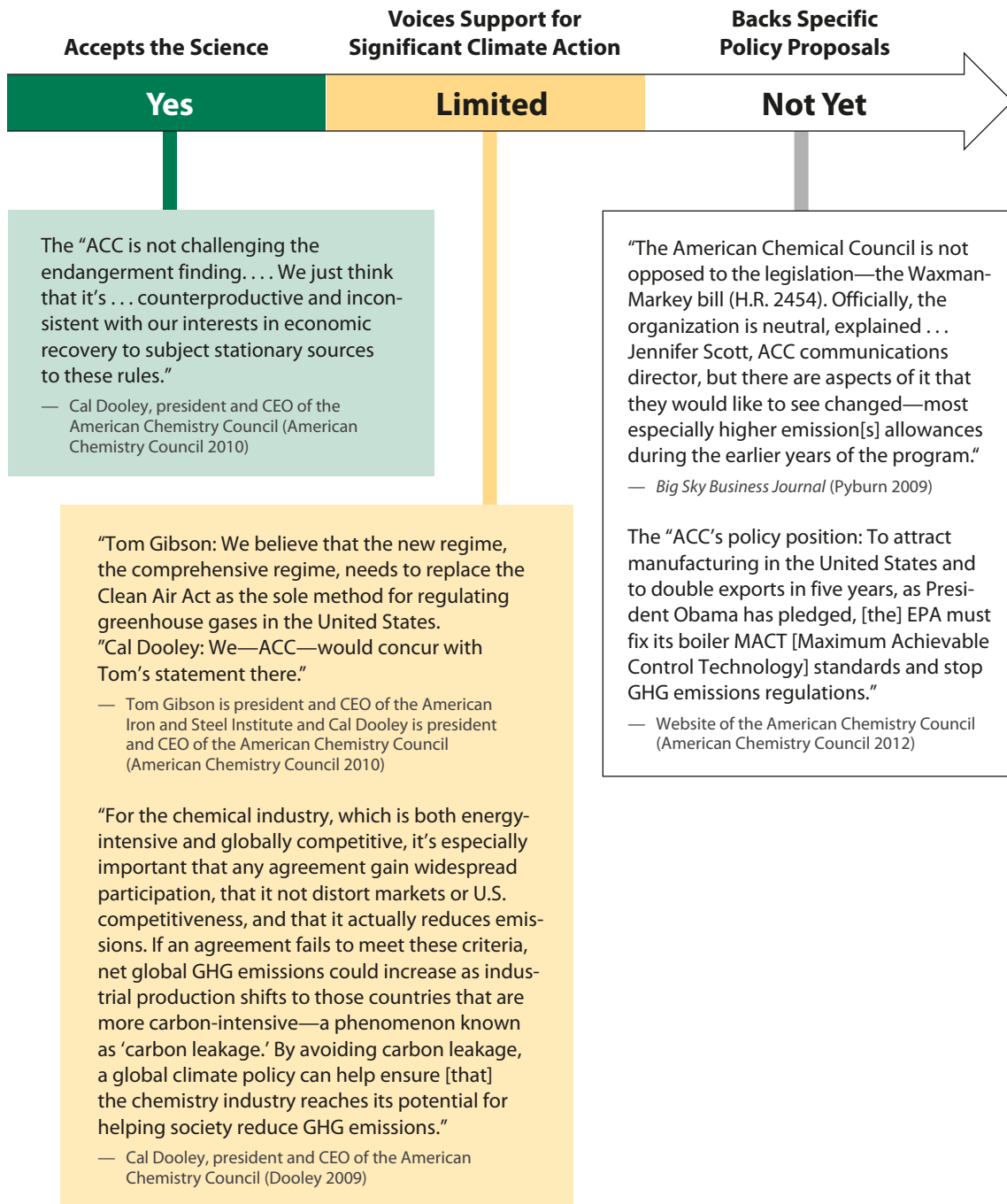
“The National Solid Wastes Management Association (NSWMA) recently submitted comments to the United States Environmental Protection Agency on how greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions from biogenic sources should be treated under the Prevention of Significant Deterioration and Title V Greenhouse Gas Tailoring Rule (generally referred to as the “Tailoring Rule”). [The] NSWMA argued that the GHG produced from biomass should not be regulated in the same manner as anthropogenic GHG (i.e., fossil fuel use) under the Tailoring Rule.”

— National Solid Wastes Management Association (EIA 2010)

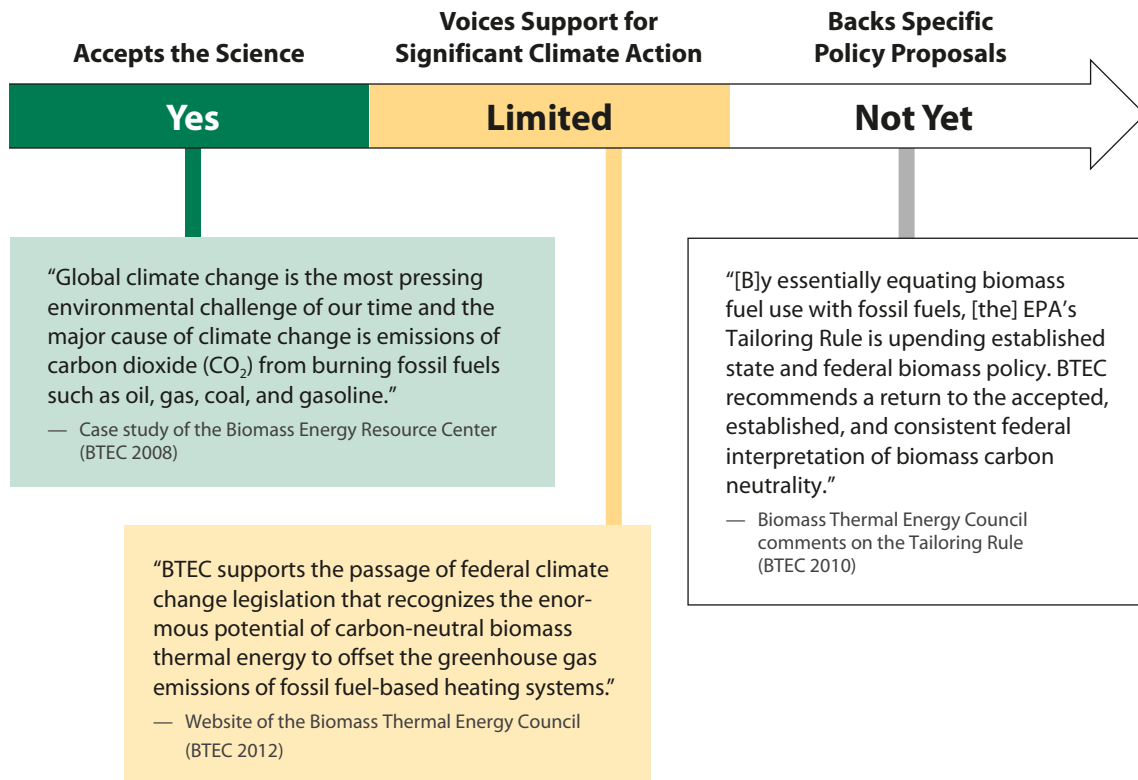
The “NSWMA believes that a national greenhouse-gas control program should: recognize inclusion of landfill-gas recovery as an offset in a cap-and-trade program and as a renewable energy source; support recycling and compost programs; recognize “early actions” that achieved greenhouse gas reductions (e.g., flaring or recovering landfill gas for energy and recycling); and support emission[s] reporting rules that address anthropogenic greenhouse gas emissions and recognize net emissions and reductions on a lifecycle basis. . . . We are proud to be one of the few industries whose greenhouse gas emissions have declined over the last 20 years.”

— Website of the Environmental Industry Associations (EIA 2012)

American Chemistry Council (ACC) on Climate Science and Policy



Biomass Thermal Energy Council (BTEC) on Climate Science and Policy



American Gas Association (AGA) on Climate Science and Policy



“We’re not in the business of arguing the science of climate change. . . . Not only is climate change happening, but it will have significant consequences for us.”

— Paula Gant, vice president of regulatory affairs at American Gas Association (Gant 2012)

“In the wake of new and modified climate change and energy legislation being introduced on Capitol Hill, the American Gas Association maintains that any such legislation should take into account the monumental strides [that] U.S. natural gas consumers have made during the past 40 years to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and increase energy efficiency. [The] AGA believes that natural gas could, and should, be used as a tool to improve environmental quality and energy efficiency.”

— Press release of the American Gas Association (AGA 2009a)

The “AGA supports a comprehensive national legislative approach to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.”

— Comments of the American Gas Association on the EPA’s Endangerment Finding (AGA 2009b)

“The American Clean Energy and Security Act of 2009 (H.R. 2454), passed today by the House of Representatives, includes several important provisions that will reduce carbon emissions and improve energy efficiency in homes and businesses that use natural gas for heating and cooling, said the American Gas Association.”

— Website of the American Gas Association (AGA 2009c)

The “AGA agrees with [the] EPA that it would be preferable to address greenhouse gas emissions through comprehensive national legislation. In past comments, we urged [the] EPA not to proceed with plans to regulate greenhouse gas emissions under the existing Clean Air Act but instead to allow Congress time to complete work on national legislation. We still believe this would be the best course.”

— Comments of the American Gas Association on the Tailoring Rule (AGA 2009d)

Nuclear Energy Institute (NEI) on Climate Science and Policy



“The need for climate change legislation is based on a scientific consensus that increasing [emissions of] man-made greenhouse gas[es] are leading to higher temperatures worldwide. To counter the potential[ly] damaging effects of excessive global warming, many scientists and policy makers are pushing for some type of price on greenhouse gas emissions to reduce the use of fossil fuels.”

— Website of the Nuclear Energy Institute (NEI 2012)

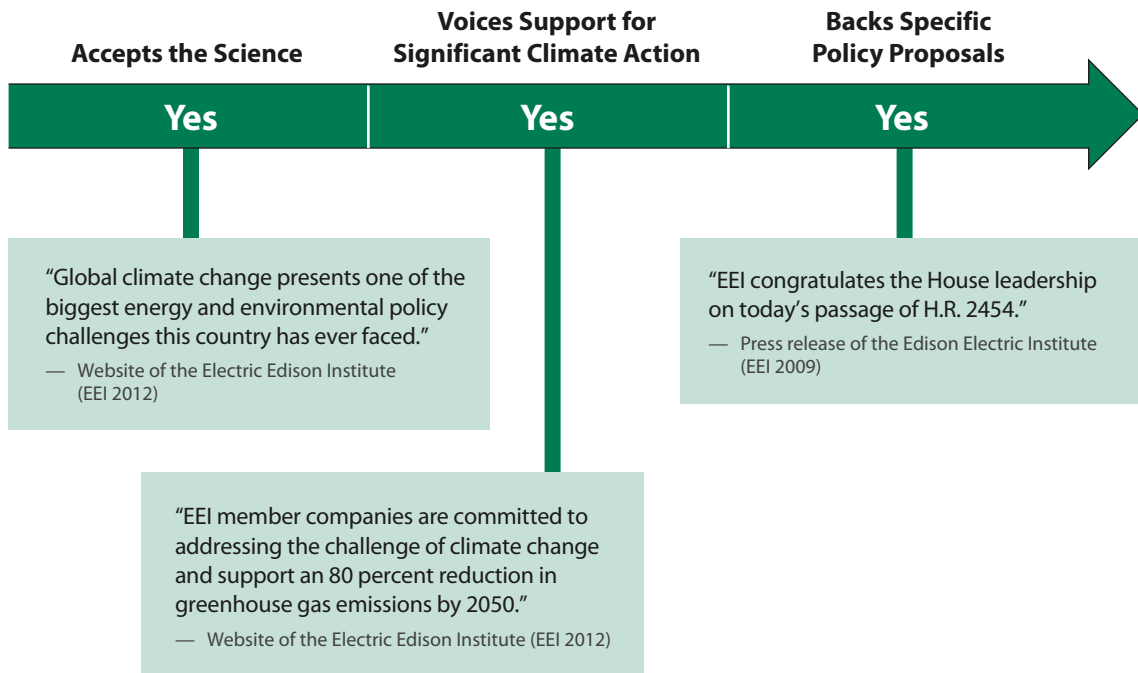
“The U.S. nuclear energy industry supports the goal of reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 80 percent by 2050 in a way that minimizes negative impact on the economy and consumers of electricity.”

— Nuclear Energy Institute statement on Boxer/Kerry climate legislation (NEI 2009a)

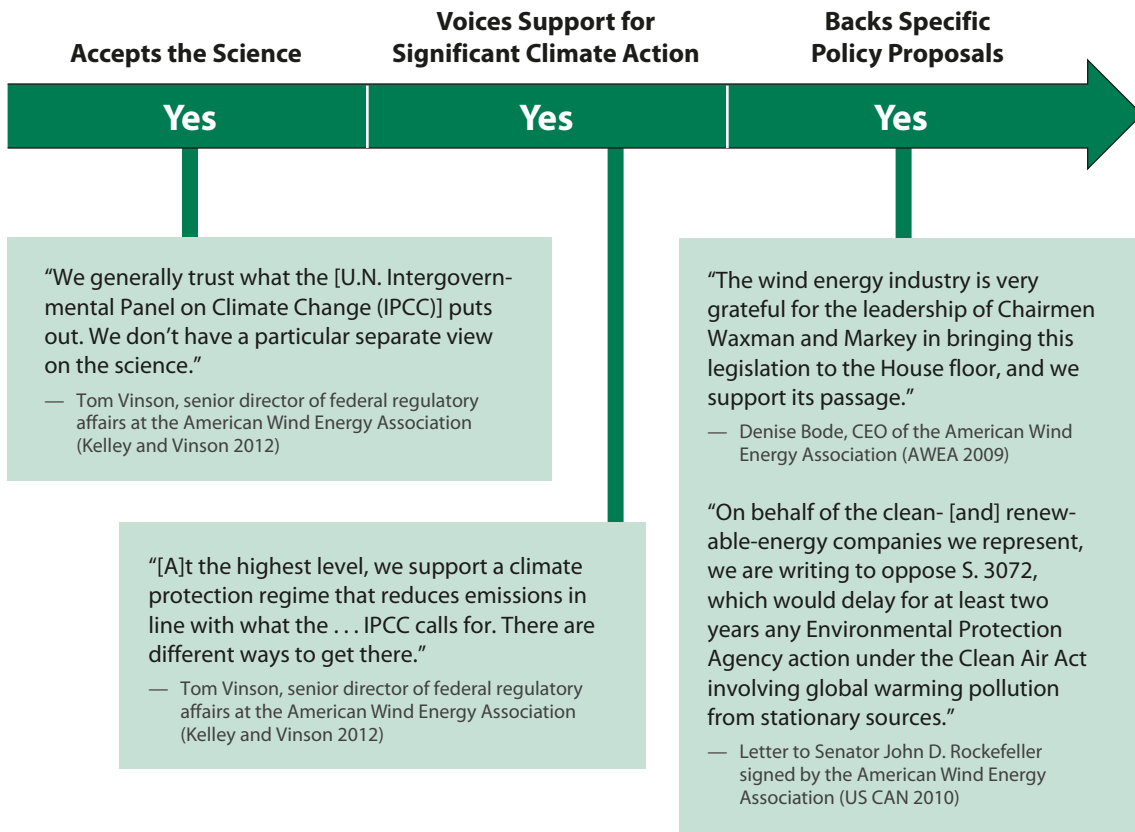
“The nuclear energy industry welcomes the inclusion of provisions promoting greater use of clean-energy technologies, including nuclear energy, as part of the American Clean Energy and Security Act. . . . As deliberations on this legislation proceed, the Nuclear Energy Institute looks forward to working with Congress to improve these clean-energy provisions further. The existing limits on financial support for any single technology will hinder the . . . administration’s ability to make available clean technologies as quickly and efficiently as possible.”

— Alex Flint, vice president for government affairs at the Nuclear Energy Institute (NEI 2009b)

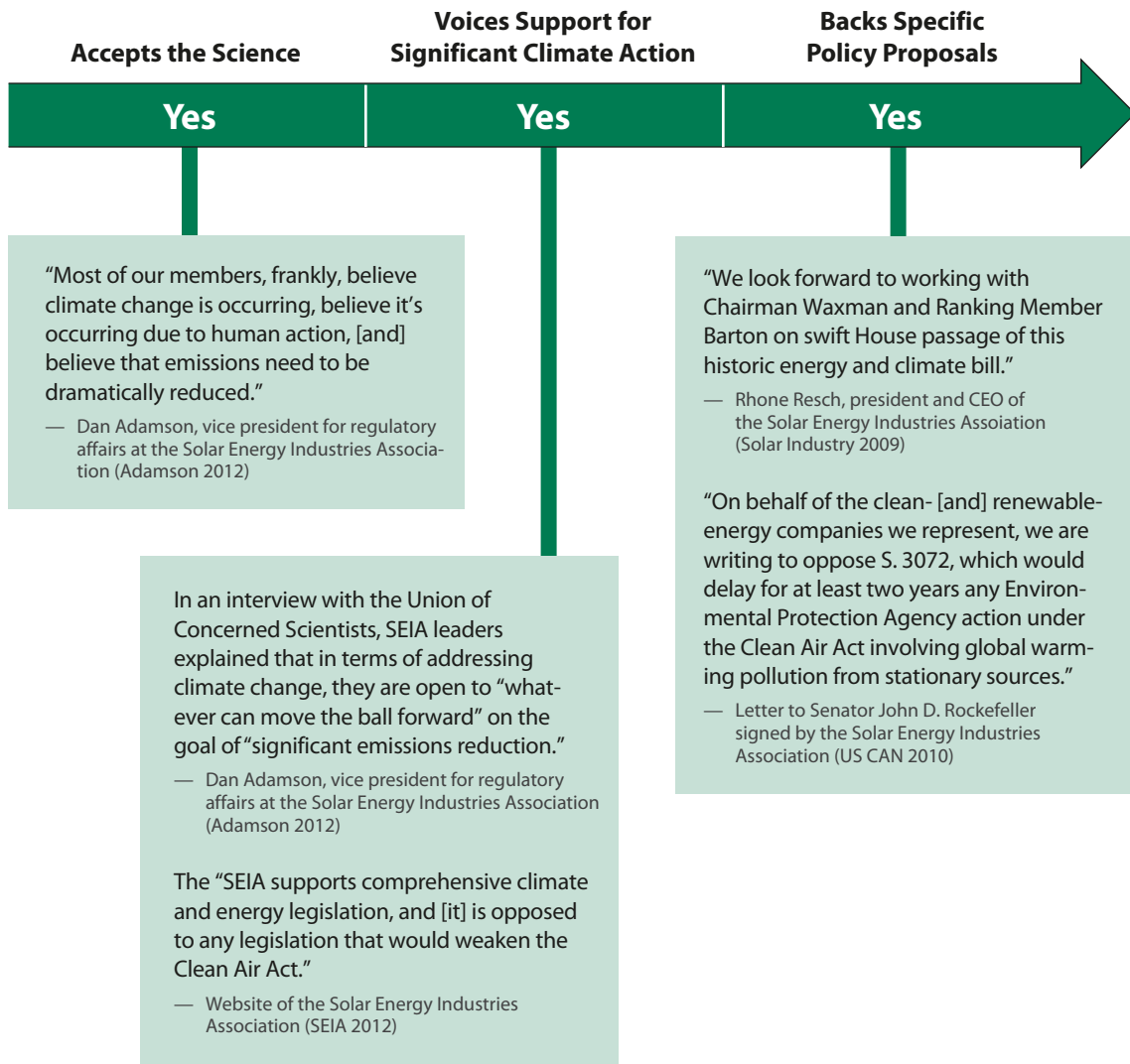
Edison Electric Institute (EEI) on Climate Science and Policy



American Wind Energy Association (AWEA) on Climate Science and Policy



Solar Energy Industries Association (SEIA) on Climate Science and Policy



CHAPTER 4

Research Summary

Through a range of approaches, at the state, national, and even international levels, trade and business associations play a large role in the public policy discussion around climate change. These associations influence how policy makers and the public perceive climate change and the need to address it.

Overall, our results suggest that a majority of U.S. trade and business associations have accepted climate science (see the table on p. 20). Almost a third of the groups assessed go further; they play a constructive role in the debate around climate policy—providing accurate science-based information to policy makers and the public—and they declare support for broad science-based policy solutions. Both the American Wind Energy Association and Solar Energy Industries Association, for instance, have strongly supported comprehensive climate legislation at the national and international levels and have even sent delegates to United Nations climate negotiations (Adamson 2012; Kelley and Vinson 2012).

Other associations, however, take a different path, continuing to cite long-refuted misinformation about climate science in order to justify opposition to climate policy proposals. For example, the American Coal Council and the American Petroleum Institute have repeatedly misrepresented climate science in their materials and public statements. Such activities harm the ability of the public and policy makers to make evidence-based decisions about climate policy. Moreover, these groups claim to support policy action on climate change, but the significant qualifiers they impose severely constrain this

support. The U.S. Chamber of Commerce, for example, claims to support emissions reductions but only if doing so “does not harm the economy, recognizes that the problem is international in scope, and aggressively promotes new technologies and efficiency” (U.S. Chamber of Commerce 2012). Such sweeping limitations give these groups the grounds for opposing virtually any climate policy proposed, now or in the future, as no policy will be perfect. For some of the groups in this category, there may never be a meaningful climate policy they would support. In other words, they seemingly seek to block any broad policy for actually addressing climate change.

Misrepresentations of climate science harm the ability of the public and policy makers to make evidence-based decisions about climate policy.

The remaining groups we analyzed (also about a third) fall between the two above-discussed positions. They accept climate science and choose only to debate climate policy based on the interests of their member companies. For example, the Biomass Thermal Energy Council says it would support federal climate policy that “recognize[d] the enormous potential of carbon-neutral biomass thermal energy” (BTEC 2012). Despite such qualifiers, groups in this category generally declare they are supportive of strong national climate policy and thus do not create barriers to progress on its development.

Where Trade and Business Associations Stand on Climate Change

Misrepresents climate science; shows limited policy support	Accepts climate science; shows limited policy support	Accepts climate science; shows significant policy support
		

The 14 associations analyzed in this report can be classified into the three categories shown. While the majority of these groups accept climate science, a third of them continue to misrepresent it in their materials and public statements.

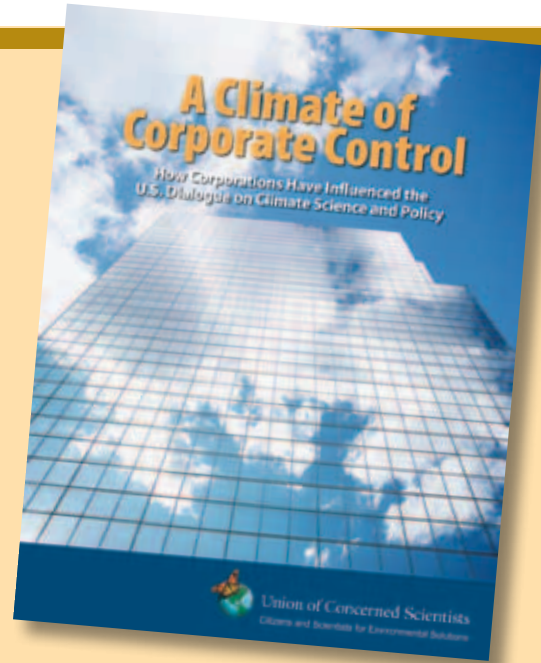
While none of the 14 associations in our sample publicly expressed opposition to all policy actions on climate change, our results show that much work remains to be done in motivating the greater business community in the United States to help advance real solutions. Fortunately, there are several things companies can do, as described in Chapter 5, to encourage their trade and business associations to help the country and the world move forward.

There are several things companies can do to encourage their trade and business associations to help the country and the world move forward.

Company Actions on Climate Change

While this report focuses on trade and business associations, individual companies are also active participants in conversations on climate change. Our previous report, *A Climate of Corporate Control*, explored the roles that 28 major corporate actors played prior to and during the discussions of several important climate change policy proposals in 2009 and 2010 (UCS 2012). That analysis revealed that while some American companies have taken laudable and consistent actions in support of climate science and policy, others have consistently and aggressively worked to undermine them.

Notably, some companies have created confusion by taking contradictory actions across different venues. Even while projecting a climate-concerned image in public settings, these corporations have sown doubt about climate science both directly, such as by challenging climate science in government filings, and indirectly, such as by supporting politicians, think tanks, and trade and business groups that misrepresent the scientific consensus on climate change and oppose actions to address climate change. This powerful subset of companies has been tremendously influential in dictating how the public understands (or misunderstands) climate science and how the national discussions on climate policy have progressed, or not.



The resulting delay and defeat of policy efforts to address climate change have huge negative implications for government, the economy, people's well-being, and the planet. But a major step in the right direction is greater transparency—encouraged by policy makers, investors, consumers, and the media—in corporate activities. Such accountability would illuminate the influence, both positive and negative, that corporations have on climate change discussions and lead us toward a policy debate that prioritizes peer-reviewed science over special interests.



The physical effects of climate change present a substantial risk to many American companies, especially those with facilities in the Gulf of Mexico, where offshore infrastructure is vulnerable to damage from more intense storms and sea level rise.



In 2009 and 2010, Congress held several hearings on climate change, inviting company executives to testify on the impact that climate regulations might have on their businesses.

CHAPTER 5

What Companies Can Do

The problem of climate change demands serious policy actions aimed at major reductions in heat-trapping emissions. Trade and business associations, being private-sector leaders, can facilitate progress toward such policies through their own engagement, dialogue, and support of evidence-based decision making, but many of these groups could use some prodding from their member companies.

Companies have the right and responsibility to weigh in on the climate-related positions that their trade and business associations take. First, climate change poses serious risks for companies. It can have adverse implications, for example, on how they obtain their materials, where they place their facilities, how they generally do business, and ultimately their bottom line (Calvert Investments, Ceres, and Oxfam America 2012). Moreover, because associations are publicly seen as representing their member companies, the latter should be conscious of such affiliations' effects on their reputations. In some cases, companies have chosen to disengage with associations because of dissatisfaction with the groups' positions on climate change. NIKE, Inc., for example, vocally resigned from the board of directors of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce in 2009, citing Chamber actions that were "inconsistent with our view that climate change is an issue in need of urgent action" (Korosec 2009). Finally, companies owe it to their shareholders, their consumers, and the public to openly state whether they agree or disagree with the policy positions of their trade and business

associations. Public companies, in particular, should reveal to their shareholders how they are supporting the political activities of their associations.

Companies that belong to an association, especially those that have a seat on its board of directors, can help steer the group away from misrepresentations of science and toward science-based policy positions. Although company-specific economic concerns will make overall consensus difficult in large trade and business associations, when it comes to working with associations with which a company disagrees, "the key to sound policy formation is broad engagement and open dialogue," says Kevin Anton, vice president and chief sustainability officer of Alcoa Inc. (Anton 2012). At the very least, companies can help ensure that their associations are not standing in the way of a comprehensive national framework to address global warming.

Companies should:

- Insist that their associations accept climate science
- Urge their associations to adopt policy goals that reflect this acceptance
- Push their associations to take stronger and more public positions in support of policies that will result in meaningful greenhouse gas emissions reductions
- Disclose whether they agree or disagree with their associations' policy positions

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ASSESSING TRADE AND BUSINESS GROUPS' POSITIONS ON CLIMATE CHANGE

Trade and business associations have represented commercial interests in the United States since before the American Revolution, and they have helped build the nation's industries. Over the past three decades national trade and business associations have increasingly focused on government relations. In 1970, fewer than 20 percent of them were headquartered in Washington, DC, but today the majority have a significant presence there. Many trade and business associations consider government relations to be their primary purpose.

The regulation of heat-trapping gases, as well as the physical effects of climate change, could significantly affect the private sector—both positively and negatively. In view of the business community's vested interest in policy debates on how to address climate change, many associations now actively engage in climate policy discussions.

To help companies understand where their associations stand, we assessed the positions that 14 U.S. trade and business associations have taken on climate science and policy in the United States between 2007 and 2012. The wide range of association stances shown in our results reveals that promising steps have been taken but much work remains to be done in motivating the greater business community in the United States to help advance real solutions.

Companies that belong to an association or, especially, those that have a seat on an association's board of directors, can help steer it away from misrepresentations of science and toward science-based policy positions. Through active engagement, companies can help ensure their trade and business associations are not standing in the way of a comprehensive national framework to address global warming.



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The Union of Concerned Scientists puts rigorous, independent science to work to solve our planet's most pressing problems. Joining with citizens across the country, we combine technical analysis and effective advocacy to create innovative, practical solutions for a healthy, safe, and sustainable future.

This report is available on the UCS website at www.ucsusa.org/tradegroups.

National Headquarters
Two Brattle Square
Cambridge, MA 02138-3780
Phone: (617) 547-5552
Fax: (617) 864-9405

Washington, DC, Office
1825 K St. NW, Suite 800
Washington, DC 20006-1232
Phone: (202) 223-6133
Fax: (202) 223-6162

West Coast Office
2397 Shattuck Ave., Suite 203
Berkeley, CA 94704-1567
Phone: (510) 843-1872
Fax: (510) 843-3785

Midwest Office
One N. LaSalle St., Suite 1904
Chicago, IL 60602-4064
Phone: (312) 578-1750
Fax: (312) 578-1751