Approved: 03/11/08
Date

MINUTES OF THE SENATE PUBLIC HEALTH AND WELFARE COMMITTEE

The meeting was called to order by Chairman James Barnett at 1:30 P.M. on March 5, 2008 in Room 136-N of the Capitol.

All members were present.

Committee staff present:
Terri Weber, Kansas Legislative Research Department
Sara Zafar, Kansas Legislative Research Department
Nobuko Folmsbee, Revisor of Statutes
Jan Lunn, Committee Secretary

Conferees appearing before the committee:
Howard Rodenberg, MD, MPH

Others attending:
See attached list.

Chairman Barnett requested that Terri Weber, Legislative Research Department, provide a brief description of the handouts she distributed: "Greenhouse Gases" from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (Attachment 1), "Greenhouse Gases and Society" (Attachment 2), and "Fast Facts" from the Environmental Protection Agency (Attachment 3). These attachments are incorporated into these minutes as a matter of record.

Chairman Barnett indicated that as legislators move forward with decisions related to energy, the Holcomb power plant, and impacts of greenhouse gasses on climate change the presentation would be beneficial to committee members. Dr. Howard Rodenberg was introduced.

Dr. Rodenberg is a previous Director of the Division of Health in the Kansas Department of Health and Environment, a previous State Health Officer, and a current emergency room physician. He has extended knowledge in public health and environmental issues.

Dr. Rodenberg presented comments (Attachment 4) and committee members reviewed a hard-copy of a slide show presentation (Attachment 5) that related to the science of climate change and its possible effects on the health of Kansans. His presentation included a description and definition of climate change, predicted effects of climate change on health, and mitigation strategies for the effects of climate change.

Dr. Rodenberg indicated there are greenhouse gasses whose molecules, within the atmosphere, trap the sun's heat energy and prevent it from being radiating into space, and in turn, radiate energy back to the earth's surface; thus, creating warming. These gases include: water vapor, carbon dioxide, methane, and other compounds. Predicted health effects of climate change and global warming are: temperature-related deaths and disability, changes in vector-borne disease, problems related to pollution, and increases in extreme weather events. Dr. Rodenberg spoke about the importance of mitigating these adverse effects by: (a) identifying and developing alternative energy strategies such as solar or wind power, (b) developing methods to eliminate greenhouse gases produced by using a "sink" or reservoir for removing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere, encouraging plankton growth in bodies of water, injecting carbon dioxide into underground geologic formations, (c) decreasing the "carbon footprint" and (d) reforestation.

Dr. Rodenberg also spoke to mercury emissions and the need to mitigate effects caused by human activity using filtration. He noted that current Environmental Protection (EPA) rules for mercury emissions have been vacated by the 2005 Clean Air Mercury Rule.

Senator Haley questioned what one or two areas were most important to implement in energy policy? Dr. Rodenberg offered his personal opinion that, on a large-scale, focus on alternative energy sources such as solar and wind should be explored, elimination or reduction of the "carbon footprint" should occur, and carbon dioxide injection strategies should be implemented.

Senator Barnett asked about the height of smoke stacks and how that contributed to greenhouse

gas emissions. Dr. Rodenberg responded that there is no magic number relating to the height of smoke stacks. What is important is the temperature of the air above and below the smoke stack, or the nocturnal temperature inversion level. If air coming out of a smoke stack is less warm than the air above, the smoke stack emission stays at ground level (and the inverse is true).

Questions were asked regarding the occurrence of extreme weather, mitigation techniques for mercury emissions, and whether documentation or reports had been developed or available to the Department of Health and Environment related to carbon dioxide emissions and/or mercury emissions and/or energy policy.

Chairman Barnett requested staff inquire of the Kansas Department of Health and Environment whether documentation and/or reports relative to energy policy, carbon dioxide emissions, and mercury emissions had been developed, and if so, that copies of such documentation be forwarded to the Senate Committee on Public Health and Welfare

Senator Brungardt asked about “acid rain” as a greenhouse gas; Senator Wagle asked whether nuclear energy is a viable alternative energy source. Dr. Rodenberg answered that “acid rain” is a greenhouse gas regulated very efficiently by the EPA; nuclear energy is a viable alternative energy source.

Members of the Committee reviewed the minutes of the February 20 and 21, 2008, meetings. Senator Haley moved to accept the minutes as submitted; Senator Schmidt seconded the motion. The minutes were unanimously accepted as written.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:25pm