

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
June 22, 2007

Contact: Marc R. Pacheco
617-722-1551

**SENATOR PACHECO, SENATOR BADDOUR, AND SENATOR TARR
CONDUCT A HEARING ON THE ENVIRONMENTAL AND HEALTH
IMPACTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE**

Boston, MA—State Senator Marc R. Pacheco (D-Taunton), chairman of the Senate Committee on Global Warming and Climate Change, joined State Senator Steven A. Baddour (D-Methuen) and State Senator Bruce E. Tarr (R-Gloucester) to lead a hearing today regarding the very pressing issue of the environmental and health impacts of climate change.

“Today we brought the state of Massachusetts one step closer to developing comprehensive policies to curb the negative effects of climate change that we already face here in the Commonwealth,” said Senator Pacheco. “By hearing testimony from leading environmental experts, business leaders and concerned citizens, we can begin to conceptualize the extent of the problem and determine how Massachusetts can become a leader in finding the solutions.”

“I’m very happy to have everyone here in this district, where we have had to deal with repeated occurrences of flooding, beach erosion, and health impacts including high asthma and skin cancer rates in Massachusetts as a result of global warming,” said Senator Baddour. “I think that community forums like this are an important part of the process that allows our committee to hear a more local perspective on these issues. I hope that this hearing can help educate individuals and our communities about better decisions we can make to lessen our negative impact on the environment.”

(Senator Tarr Quote)

The hearing took place at the Northern Essex Community College in Haverhill, a town that has experienced increased levels of air pollution due to the region’s trash transfer centers.

Global warming and climate change have many harmful effects on our environment, which in turn negatively impact the public’s health. According to experts who testified today, such as Frank Gorke, director of Environment Massachusetts, we have already begun to encounter these effects in Massachusetts.

“If we don’t take action, we will see rising sea levels, more severe weather, more asthma attacks, and more species extinction, as a result of global warming,” said Gorke. “We need to take swift action to solve this problem.”

Some of the most negative effects include increases in heat-related deaths and illnesses, ozone levels, and air and water pollution. It is believed that climate change also contributes to increased amounts of ground-level ozone, which can damage lung tissue and exacerbate respiratory illnesses, such as asthma and chronic lung disease.

Warming of the earth's atmosphere also generates a wet, hot environment where disease-carrying insects thrive, thus increasing the risk of mosquito and tick-borne diseases, such as Eastern Equine Encephalitis and Lyme disease.

The hearing served as a forum for legislators, citizens, environmental experts and business leaders to discuss the impacts of climate change and possible solutions.

"We're encouraged that the lawmakers are starting to take steps in the right direction," said Gorke. "The hearing was helpful in educating people about the impacts of global warming and some of the solutions that are available like wind energy, solar energy, conservation and smart growth."

In a way, Massachusetts already plays a leadership role in the fight against global warming. The newly founded Senate Committee on Global Warming and Climate Change, chaired by Senator Pacheco, is the first of its kind in the United States, according to the Council of State Governments. The issue has garnered the attention of many legislators from both the republican and democratic parties.

After testifying at the hearing, Julie Wormser, of the Appalachian Mountain Club, said she applauded the Committee's tremendous leadership on this issue.

"It was great to see how engaged and committed they all are," Wormser said. "We hope that any legislation they file works to decrease our state's carbon footprint while providing incentives to protect our forests. We look forward to continue working with them towards this goal in the future."

Steve Long, government relations associate for the Nature Conservancy, also applauded Senator Pacheco, Senator Baddour and Senator Tarr for taking a leadership role in climate change and offered testimony today about his ideas for solutions.

"We encourage a two-pronged approach to addressing climate change by reducing emissions and supporting the ability of plant and animal species to survive and adapt to the impacts of climate change," Long said.

"I am happy with the progress we have made so far," said Senator Pacheco. "These hearings help us engage the ideas of experts and citizens and are the first step in the process of developing legislation to protect the citizens of the Commonwealth."