

For Immediate Release:
April 2, 2007

Contact:
James Moore, VPIRG, 802-223-8421 ext. 4077
Paul Burns, VPIRG, 802-223-8421 ext. 4095

Science Wins in Supreme Court Ruling on Global Warming

In one of the most important environmental decisions rendered in a generation, the U.S. Supreme Court today rebuked the Bush administration for its failure to take action against global warming pollution.

The Bush administration had argued that it was inappropriate to regulate greenhouse gas emissions because the U. S. Environmental Protection Agency lacked the authority to do so under the Clean Air Act and because the causal link between greenhouse gases and global warming had not been unequivocally established.

Massachusetts, Vermont and a number of other states and local governments as well as several advocacy groups including USPIRG, the Sierra Club and the Conservation Law Foundation challenged the Bush administration's decision. USPIRG is the federal advocacy office for VPIRG.

The Court made clear in its 5-4 decision that carbon dioxide is a pollutant under the Clean Air Act, and therefore the Environmental Protection Agency has the authority to regulate the emissions of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases from cars and industry.

The Court ordered the EPA to reconsider its decision not to regulate carbon dioxide emissions from cars. In the meantime, the ruling will have major implications for Vermont, which has issued rules to reduce global warming pollution from cars and has been challenged by the auto industry in a separate legal action.

Under the Clean Air Act, states may adopt California's tailpipe emissions standards in lieu of minimum federal standards. Vermont and eight other states have adopted California's standards to reduce fleet-wide global warming emissions from new vehicles by 25 percent in model year 2009, rising to 30 percent in model year 2016. Had the Court ruled in favor of the Bush administration and the U.S. auto industry, Vermont's clean cars law would have been in greater jeopardy.

"This is perhaps the greatest example in recent times of science winning over politics," said Paul Burns, Executive Director of the Vermont Public Interest Research Group. "In the face of overwhelming worldwide evidence, President Bush and his administration have been ignoring the facts, attacking the messengers and stifling their own scientists in an effort to block action against global warming. The Supreme Court's unambiguous rebuke in this case has removed the last fig leaf in the administration's defense of industrial polluters."

“This decision only lends support to our congressional delegation’s efforts to pass strong new legislation aimed at reducing greenhouse gas emissions 80 percent by 2050. We hope that it will also strengthen the resolve of state legislators to pass meaningful legislation with adequate funding this year aimed at reducing Vermont’s contribution to global warming,” added James Moore, VPIRG’s Clean Energy Advocate.