



Gore Churns Up Global Warming Debate

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LOS ANGELES, CA, United States (UPI) -- The thought of gasoline going to \$4 per gallon this summer is small potatoes next to the high-stakes debate that is being revved up in anticipation of this month's politically charged premiere of Al Gore's documentary on global warming.

The high-profile film, 'An Inconvenient Truth,' comes flying out of the sun with a bludgeoning message to Americans that the gasoline and electricity they are burning through every day is not only costing them more, but is leading the world down the road to virtual destruction.

'With wit, smarts and hope, 'An Inconvenient Truth,' ultimately brings home Gore's persuasive argument that we can no longer afford to view global warming as a political issue,' trumpets the film's Web site,

'rather, it is the biggest moral challenges facing our global civilization.'

The movie is constructed more as a study of Gore's barnstorming tours aimed at rousing public awareness of global warming, an exercise of preaching to the environmentalist choir about a seemingly inevitable fate.

But the Washington lobbying machine isn't taking this cinematic exercise lying down. News releases from various think tanks have begun flying around that pan the movie not so much for its cinematic merits, but rather for giving credibility to global warming.

'The complexity of the climate and the limitations of data and computer models mean all projections of future climate change are unreliable at best,' wrote

David Legates, director of the University of Delaware's Center for Climatic Research and author of a new study on global warming for the National Center for Policy Analysis.

The Competitive Policy Institute raised the specter of a dark new world order in which the American people would be placed on starvation energy rations in a vain attempt to slash carbon dioxide emissions.

'Mr. Gore has always promoted causes that would require taking decisions away from the people and putting them in the hands of expert elite,' said Myron Ebell, head of the institute's Energy and Global Warming office.

The stakes of the global warming debate are indeed high whether the dire predictions of melting ice sheets, sizzling drought and possible food riots come true or not. The United States has officially bet that they won't. Congress and the Bush administration stalled U.S. ratification of the controversial Kyoto agreement because of its

potential body blow to the economy.

'The campaign to limit carbon dioxide emissions is the single most important regulatory issue today,' summed up CEI Senior Fellow Marlow Lewis. 'It is nothing short of an attempt to suppress energy use, which in turn would be economically devastating -- all to avert an alleged catastrophe whose scientific basis is dubious.'

Critics of global warming argue that modest increases of a degree or two may constitute a change in the climate, but hardly one that will KO the world as we know it.

At the same time, however, the film's title suggests that it will indeed prove 'inconvenient' to make the lifestyle and economic changes necessary to slash emissions of climate-changing gases in time.

The rhetoric stirred up by the film doesn't break much new ground; however it could have a positive effect in the form of fresh looks at the genuine scientific data against the backdrop of soaring gasoline prices.

By coincidence, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology held a conference on energy over the weekend where author Joseph Romm warned that time was running out and that the highly complex and

expensive nature of energy infrastructure was a daunting barrier to introduction of new clean-energy technologies.

'Breaking into the energy market is completely different than breaking into the cell phone or telecommunications market because of the infrastructure requirements,' said Romm, whose upcoming tome, 'Hydrogen Hype,' throws cold water on the idea of hydrogen-powered cars saving the day.

The price tags for nuclear power plants and liquefied natural gas terminals top \$1 billion while at the same time breakthrough technologies such as nuclear fusion and superconducting materials remain largely in the developmental or theoretical realms.

Ethanol offers promise, Romm told the audience, while increasing energy efficiency is about the best bet at this time.

Eventually, he opined, cars will have to get 60 miles per gallon. At the same time, he said, 'someone will have to be an adult' and put a stop to construction of coal-burning power plants not only in the United States but in China and the rest of the world.

'If you want (carbon dioxide) concentrations to peak by 2050, then you have to have global emissions peak by 2025,' he explained. 'Someone

has to be an adult and just stop it.'

That type of talk will likely rile global warming critics and true believers to equal levels and will make 'An Inconvenient Truth' one of the most talked-about films of the year -- even if it is mostly in the form of sound bites and press releases.