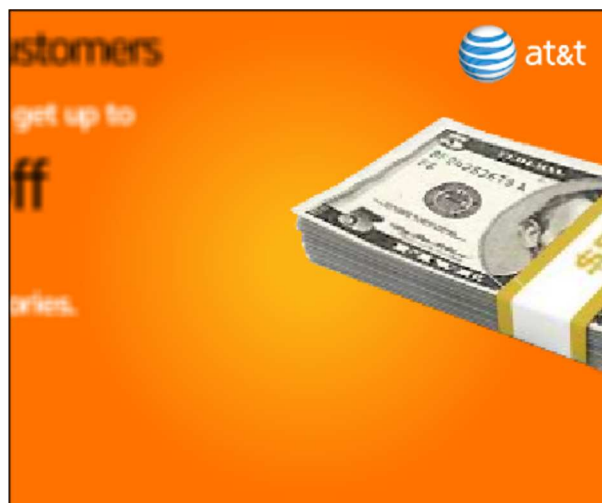


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The Precautionary Principle

Posted By [John Stossel](#) On December 3, 2009 @ 11:19 am In [Global Warming](#), [Regulation](#) | [4 Comments](#)



In his WSJ [Op Ed](#) ^[1] today, Daniel Henninger addresses the environmental movement's new justification for regulation aimed at global warming:

Beneath this dispute is a relatively new, very postmodern environmental idea known as "the precautionary principle." As defined by one official version: "When an activity raises threats of harm to the environment or human health, precautionary measures should be taken even if some cause and effect relationships are not fully established scientifically." The global-warming establishment says we know "enough" to impose new rules on the world's use of carbon fuels. The dissenters say this demotes science's traditional standards of evidence.

The EPA director is eager to regulate:

The Obama administration's new head of policy at EPA, Lisa Heinzerling, is an advocate of turning precaution into standard policy. In a law-review article titled "Law and Economics for a Warming World," Ms. Heinzerling wrote, "Policy formation based on prediction and calculation of expected harm is no longer relevant; the only coherent response to a situation of chaotically worsening outcomes is a precautionary policy. . . ."

The "precautionary principle" sounds reasonable. Why not take precautions? But it is an excuse to ignore cost-benefit analysis when global warming alarmists don't like the results. It's no surprise they don't. As Jerry Taylor of the CATO Institute points out, of the 13 peer-reviewed academic studies on the economic impact IPCC warming predictions, [some show minor economic losses, and others show gains](#) ^[2] (since cold regions will become more productive.) But they are all roughly centered around zero. In other words, even if we assume global warming is real, it's not clear it will be harmful.

I guess that doesn't matter to the EPA director.

But I hope others think twice before supporting trillion dollar taxes in the name of global warming.

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URLs in this post:

[1] Op Ed: <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052748704107104574572091993737848.html>

[2] some show minor economic losses, and others show gains: <http://www.thegwpf.org/subject-index/economics/96-the-economics-of-climate-change-essential-knowledge.html>

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