The groups endorsing this include the March of Dimes Birth Defects Foundation, the American Academy of Pediatrics, the National Association of Children's Hospitals, the American Hospital Association, the National Easter Seals Society, the Spina Bifida Association of America, and numerous others.

I urge all of my colleagues and people who may be listening around the country to urge the House to take up this important legislation and pass it this year. As we get to the end of a particular year's session, there are always so many things, so many other bills that people think are priorities. Let me ask anybody to name me a priority that would be higher than helping the families of America of each of our States avoid the tragedy of the loss of an infant through birth defects or the permanent disability of a child born with birth defects.

America's families and all of us have waited too long for this measure because it can go a long way in preventing birth defects, which is the leading cause of infant death. Quite simply, a little prevention goes a long way in avoiding family pain and heartache. It is up to Congress, it is up to us to seize this excellent opportunity to protect our most valuable resources—our children. I urge all of my colleagues to pay attention and to take an interest in this vital matter.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

RECESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate stands in recess until 2:15 p.m. today.

Thereupon, at 12:39 p.m., the Senate recessed until 2:15 p.m.; whereupon, the Senate reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer [Mr. COATS].

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Chair, in his capacity as a Senator from the State of Indiana, suggests the absence of a quorum.

The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. KERRY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. KERRY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent I be permitted to speak as in morning business.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator is recognized to speak as in morning business.

GLOBAL WARMING

Mr. KERRY. Mr. President, this week, representatives from over 160 nations are meeting in Bonn, Germany, for the final negotiating session prior to the climate change conference scheduled in Kyoto in December. It is a critical meeting, the culmination of several years of international cooperation on this extraordinarily important global issue.

Over the past several months I have had an opportunity to discuss global warming with scientists and representatives from the United States and abroad and, indeed, we have had one brief discussion on the Senate floor in the context of the Byrd-Hagel amendment.

Last week, I met in London with a number of officials of the Government of Great Britain, but most importantly on this subject with Foreign Minister Robin Cook, to discuss our mutual concerns about the climate change problem and how best to address this issue from a global perspective. As our U.S. negotiators continue their work in Bonn and the President finalizes the U.S. position for the Kyoto conference, I wanted to share with my colleagues some views on the science of global warming, on the international process, the U.S. role, and the next steps that the United States and others should undertake to address this issue in a responsible manner.

Last July, I joined with Senator BYRD and others in the Chamber to discuss global warming and to debate Senate Resolution 98 which addressed some of the Senate position on the Kyoto treaty. The Byrd-Hagel resolution called for the United States to support binding commitments to reduce greenhouse gases only if: One, all nations, developed and developing, participate in addressing this global problem; and two, if the commitment did not adversely impact the U.S. economy. In addition, the resolution created a bipartisan Senate observer group of which I am pleased to be a member. Our task is to continue to monitor this process.

I supported the Byrd-Hagel resolution, Mr. President, which passed the Senate 95–0 after we worked out in colloquy some of the interpretations of definitions contained therein. I supported it because I believe that there has to be a universal effort to tackle this ever-growing problem, and that the United States, while taking a lead role, need not jeopardize its economic viability in order to meet our international obligations.

The resolution language, in my judgment, provides enough flexibility to address the concerns of growing economies of the developing world even as we encourage them to join in this global effort.

The resolution was silent, however, as to the science of global warming. It addressed only the U.S. role in the Kyoto negotiations. During the debate over the resolution, there was some discussion by a few Senators over their interpretation individually of the science. But there was no broad debate about the science, and there was certainly in the resolution no judgment by the U.S. Senate whatsoever as to the foundations of science which might or might not be applied to the negotiations in Kyoto. From the statements in the RECORD by the resolution's chief sponsor, Senator BYRD, it is clear that he agrees, as I and others do, that the prospect of human-induced global warming as an accepted thesis is beyond debate, and that there are many adverse impacts that can be anticipated as a consequence of those theories in fact being found to be true. We are joined by many of our colleagues in thinking that there is sufficient scientific consensus that human activities are exacerbating climate changes.

The vast majority of scientists and policymakers who have examined this issue carefully have concluded that the science is sound and that it is time to take additional steps through the established international theory to address this issue in a more systematic way. A small but extremely vociferous minority continue to assert that the science is not yet convincing. They advocate a wait-and-see approach. They believe that continued review and inaction is best for the U.S. economy and for Americans in general.

Given the money that the very vociferous minority has been expending in trying to promote their view, and given the fact that shortly we will be engaged in some discussions based on the factual foundations of this issue, I would like to address the issue of science for a few moments on the floor of the Senate.

Mr. President, the vast majority of the scientific community—the vast majority of those who have taken time to make a dispassionate, apolitical, nonideological determination based on lifetimes of work, and certainly on a lifetime-acquired discipline in their particular areas—the vast majority of consensus of those who have been so engaged is that the science regarding global warming is compelling and that to do nothing would be the most dangerous of all options.

In the late 1980's, a number of our Senate colleagues—among them Vice President GORE, State Department Counselor Tim Wirth, Senators JOHN HEINZ and FRITZ HOLLINGS—and I, and a few others became increasingly concerned about the potential threat of global warming. It was at that time that I joined as an original cosponsor of Senator HOLLINGS' bill, the National Global Change Research Act, which attracted support from many Members still serving in this body, including Senators STEVENS, MCCAIN, COCHRAN, INOUYE, and GORTON. After numerous hearings and roundtable discussions, this legislation to create the global change research program at the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration became law in 1990.

As a Senator from a coastal State I take very seriously parochial implications of global warming. As a United States Senator and a member of the Foreign Relations Committee, I am also concerned about the crafting of a workable international response that treats all parties—including the United States —fairly.