

# SENATOR STABENOW: “GLOBAL WARMING’ CAUSES MORE HURRICANES AND TORNADOES”

*by Christopher Monckton*



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by Christopher Monckton | August 14, 2009

Senator Debbie Stabenow (D-Mich), in an interview with the *Detroit News* in mid-August 2009, said: “Climate change is very real.” She endorsed cap and trade’s massive tax increase on Michigan industry, saying it would not lead to an increase in manufacturing costs or energy prices. “Global warming creates volatility,” said Senator Stabenow. “I feel it when I’m flying. The storms are more volatile. We are paying the price in more hurricanes and tornadoes.”

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Every part of Senator Stabenow’s statement is misleading at best, false at worst. Her statement that “global warming” creates “volatility”, which she feels when she is flying, is entirely without scientific foundation, for the simple reason that there has been no statistically-significant “global warming” for 15 years. Indeed, there has been rapid and statistically-significant global cooling for almost eight years. So the “volatility” which she feels when flying – no doubt usually at the taxpayer’s expense – cannot be caused by “global warming”, because there has not been any.

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One of the clearest demonstrations that politicians are inventing scare stories about the climate is when they attribute recent events, such as “volatility” when flying, to “global warming” that has not happened for almost a decade and a half.<sup>1</sup> The Senator’s statement about “global warming” might have had some credibility had she spoken out 15 years ago, when there had been “global warming” for two decades. Even then, however, there was nothing exceptional about the warming – there had been identical warming rates from 1860-

<sup>1</sup> See July Monthly CO<sub>2</sub> Report: [http://scienceandpublicpolicy.org/monthly\\_report/sppi\\_monthly\\_co2\\_report\\_july.html](http://scienceandpublicpolicy.org/monthly_report/sppi_monthly_co2_report_july.html).

1880 and again from 1910-1940. During both of these earlier periods, humankind cannot have had any appreciable influence over global temperatures. Yet in the later period, when we might in theory have had some influence over temperatures, the rate of warming was not one whit greater than in the earlier period.

Senator Stabenow's statement may have been timed to coincide with the publication in the journal *Nature* of a paper by Michael E. Mann and others, claiming that tropical cyclone activity in the North Atlantic has greatly increased during the past 100 years. However, Mann's new "hockey-stick" graph, this time of tropical-cyclone activity, is likely to prove no sounder than his comprehensively-discredited<sup>2</sup> former "hockey-stick" graph attempting to abolish the medieval warm period, during which temperatures worldwide were substantially greater than they are today. The earlier graph, also published in *Nature*, not only pretended that there had not been a warm period in the Middle Ages but overstated the measured increase in northern-hemisphere temperature over the 20<sup>th</sup> century by an impressive 50%, but the peer-reviewers in that journal, which has declared a reprehensible and unscientific editorial bias in favor of an avowedly alarmist position on "global warming", do not take much trouble to scrutinize papers that reinforce *Nature's* declared prejudice on the subject.

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More than 700 scientists from 400 institutions in 40 countries have contributed to papers published over the past 20 years providing evidence for the fact that the medieval warm period was real, was global, and was warmer than the present. In fact, most of the past 10,000 years were warmer than the present, sometimes by up to 5 F. Presumably, therefore, if Gulfstream V private jets had been invented a few millennia earlier than they were, Senator Stabenow would have had an uncomfortable time. But she would not have had the satisfaction of being able to blame the "volatility" of the climate on anthropogenic "global warming", because the warmer weather could not – on any view – have been caused by humankind.

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Dr. Mann's latest "hockey-stick" graph is, if anything, even more bizarre than his former graph. For a start, his graph shows a strong peak of tropical-cyclone

<sup>2</sup> [http://scienceandpublicpolicy.org/monckton/what\\_hockey\\_stick.html](http://scienceandpublicpolicy.org/monckton/what_hockey_stick.html).

activity in – guess when – the Middle Ages. One of two consequences follows. Either his original “hockey stick” graph that attempted to abolish the medieval warm period was wrong, or there was no connection between temperatures and the frequency, intensity, and duration of tropical cyclones in the Middle Ages, in which event – even if hurricanes had become more prevalent in recent times – there is plainly no compelling connection between them and global temperatures.

Furthermore, though hurricane and other tropical-cyclone data are now available in real time from the satellites, Dr. Mann’s graph is carefully cut off three years ago, in 2005/6. The reason for this curtailment is not hard to find. There has been a very rapid fall in hurricane activity over the past three years, so that, according to Ryan Maue of Florida State University, there is less tropical-cyclone activity at present than at almost any time in the past half-century. That fact, conveniently concealed by the simple expedient of truncating the hurricane graph so that the most recent three years are missing, demonstrates how baseless is Senator Stabenow’s imaginative suggestion that we are “paying the price” for “global warming” in more hurricanes and tornadoes.

If the Senator – who has just been appointed to the Energy Committee of the Senate – actually knew any climate science, she would have been rather careful with her words. Dr. Kerry Emanuel first posited a strong link between global temperatures and global tropical-cyclone activity in 2005: however, reports are that he has recently recanted to some extent. It is well known that tropical cyclones require certain preconditions for their formation. First, they tend to occur only in the tropics or sub-tropics, because they are driven by the Coriolis force consequent upon the Earth’s rotation. For this reason tropical cyclones do not occur within 5 degrees of the Equator. Secondly, tropical cyclones require a differential between the ocean temperature and the air temperature. It is this differential, more than the absolute temperature of either the ocean or the air, which is an essential precondition for a tropical cyclone.

However, it is settled science that, if and when “global warming” resumes, a warmer world will exhibit generally smaller temperature differentials than a cooler world. Even the UN’s climate panel gets this fact right. For this and other reasons, Dr. Emanuel has recently modified his position, and no longer regards the link between warmer weather and stronger

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or more frequent tropical cyclones as certain. Outside the tropics, it is generally agreed that warmer weather will tend to reduce storminess.

One problem that bedevils climate science is the recent increase in the ability of humankind to count storms or tornadoes, thanks to global satellite coverage. This increase in our

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powers of observation allows us to count more storm events than before, but it does not mean that there actually are more storm events. For instance, there has been an apparent increase in the frequency of tropical storms over the past half-century, but we have strong reason to believe that this increase is purely an artefact of better observation. Why? Because the annual number of landfalling hurricanes, which we have been able to count for 150 years (one does not need a satellite to provide information that a hurricane has struck the coastline), has not increased at all during the period. There is no trend at all. From the failure of storm events that were correctly and fully observed throughout the past 150 years to increase, we may deduce that storm events that were not so easy to observe have not increased either, even though our ability to observe them has increased.

Senator Stabenow's suggestion that "global warming" has increased the frequency or intensity of tornadoes is also ill-founded. Like tropical cyclones, more tornadoes are being reported than in former times: however, this

increase in reporting does not reflect an increase in the number of tornadoes so much as an increase in our capacity to observe them. In fact, the number of severe tornadoes reported each year has been falling throughout the past 30 years, and the number of deaths from tornadoes has fallen still faster, reflecting our ability to predict them and to sound warnings in time.

Senator Stabenow also believes that the Waxman-Markey Bill will not destroy jobs throughout America.

If she will believe that, as the Duke of Wellington used to say, she will believe anything. The Bill – though the media seldom report this – declares that it will close down five-sixths of the fossil-fuel-based economy of the United States. Five jobs in six will disappear. Of course –

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and this is much more widely reported – the Bill imagines that new “green jobs” will replace the old. However, “green jobs” is the new phrase for mass unemployment. If fossil-fuelled power generation is ended, and no new nuclear stations are built (the Bill is culpably silent on the need for new nuclear power stations), it is fanciful in the extreme to assume that windmills (which only work when the wind is blowing) and solar panels (which only work when the sun is shining, which it somehow fails to do at night, when electricity is most in demand) will make up the coming shortfall in electricity.

If the supporters of the Waxman/Markey Bill get their way, the lights will be going out all over America. The factories will close. The transport system

will shut down. The hospitals will not be able to operate. As Speaker Newt Gingrich has rightly observed, “President Obama should remember that bowing to the King of Saudi Arabia is not an energy policy.”


Finally, Senator Stabenow somehow failed to mention in her ramblings about “global warming” that Michigan has just had its coldest July on record. The water levels in the Great Lakes, including Lake Michigan, has resumed their 30-year cyclical rise, defying a decade of media scare stories that “global warming” was drying them out. “Global warming”? What “global warming”?<sup>3</sup> Polls show that among Michigan’s voters “global warming” does not even make it into the top ten concerns. If

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<sup>3</sup> [http://scienceandpublicpolicy.org/originals/warming\\_not\\_happening.html](http://scienceandpublicpolicy.org/originals/warming_not_happening.html).



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