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LARRY CRAIG

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NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release
April 3, 2008

Susan Irby (202) 224-8078
Will Hart (208) 342-7985

BOISE STATE WINS “FINAL FOUR”
COLLEGE CLIMATE CHANGE CHALLENGE
***--Craig awards “Championship” to Broncos over
Yale, Cal, and Minnesota--***

WASHINGTON, D.C. – U.S. Senator Larry Craig, a member of the Energy and Public Works Committee, today conducted *Craig’s College Climate Change Challenge* with a panel of universities discussing strategies for reducing greenhouse gas emissions on campus. Witnesses included Chancellor Robert Birgeneau from the University of California, Berkeley; Chancellor Jacqueline Johnson from the University of Minnesota, Morris; and President Richard C. Levin from Yale University.

Craig noted, “What your colleges and universities are doing today is outside any law that Congress could ever create. You are grabbing the issue, you are taking the issue and running with it in a fair and responsible way... Where the market really is today is with these universities and what they will produce. That’s what we will sell to the world and that’s the course of future energy, not us thinking that we are so smart that we can manipulate it and play games with it here in Congress.”

Senator Craig’s “carbon footprint” competition pitted the three universities against Idaho’s best known underdog, Boise State University. Each witness was asked to provide the average amount of CO₂ their university produced for every student on their campus. The Senator used a “Final Four Bracket” to unveil the results, which culminated in BSU being recognized for its students only contributing 2.7 metric tons per year of greenhouse gasses, as compared to the highest emitter, Yale (19.2), University of California Berkeley (6.3), and the University of Minnesota Morris, which plans to be emission-free by 2010, but previously claimed to be emitting 7.1 metric tons per student before constructing their own wind turbine.

Senator Craig applauded Boise State University’s “underdog” victory during a hearing that was often light-hearted and focused as much on school spirit as on the global climate. After recognizing that four Democrat members of the Committee went to Yale, Sen. Craig received a commitment from the acting Chairwoman, and Yale Alum, Sen. Amy Klobuchar, that she would agree to another hearing where universities from Idaho might have the opportunity to testify.

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In the absence of a home state witness, Senator Craig noted that “Idaho’s universities are no less committed than the schools before us today. My alma mater, University of Idaho, is one of only eight university members of the Chicago Climate Exchange (CCX), and all of Idaho’s schools work closely with the Idaho National Laboratory through the Center for Advanced Energy Studies (CAES) to produce homegrown students that will help us develop cleaner energy solutions, like nuclear, wind, geothermal, solar, and hydroelectric power.”

Craig also noted that “the University of Idaho has the lowest carbon footprint of any of the schools in the Chicago exchange, and we’re very proud of that because Idaho itself has the lowest carbon footprint of any state.”

Senator Craig also asked panelists if they believed climate change could be seriously addressed without a strong role for nuclear power. Chancellor Birgeneau from UC-Berkeley responded, “I’m a passionate supporter of nuclear energy. I think it should be a critical part of our energy strategy. Because of the disappearance of funding in that area in the 1990s, nuclear engineering departments, like ours at Berkeley, suffered, and we’re in the process of revitalizing it.” The Senator encouraged the Chancellor to “call DOE, and ask them about the Nuclear Science Talent provision” that he included in the COMPETES Bill that the President signed last year. The Senator reaffirmed his intent to see that the provision receives full funding in FY2009.

President Levin expressed Yale’s support for all sources of clean energy, including nuclear. “Nuclear plants are very efficient baseload electricity plants and they’re completely green. It’s very logical to be working on them.”

Senator Craig concluded that “America has blinked and awakened to 20 years of abstinence in the energy field, and they’re not very happy with us because of the prices involved and the realities that are about. Hopefully, with our universities playing very important roles in this, like the great country we are, we’ll overcome it.”