

45 BEACON

LETTER FROM HEADQUARTERS

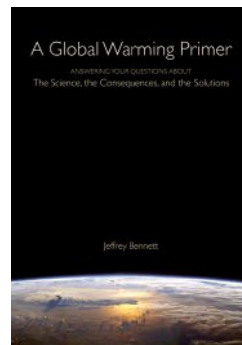
A Resource for Those Seeking Good Information on Climate Change

Recently, I was talking with a relative who does not have a scientific background and who is what I would call unconvinced on the role of humans in climate change. Her preferred sources of news and information tend toward those that question the science. She was very familiar with the misleading arguments, half-truths, and outright falsehoods that are routinely made in those public forums, including that there have been times in the past when Earth was warmer than now, that it could be natural variability, that solar cycles explain what we see, that there has not been any warming for the past two decades, that the warming we have seen is not well predicted and is not really understood, and others. And she was sure that there were many in the scientific community who question what are, in fact, conclusions that rest on multiple independent lines of evidence that have been thoroughly tested and vetted by thousands of independent scientists and scientific bodies.

The thing that made this conversation a little different from others I have had was a sense of this relative's genuine frustration with the scientific community. As I went through each argument and tried to explain clearly what the science is showing us, she said, "Why isn't there a way for me to get all these explanations of what scientists know and understand so that I can be informed? All I get is 'global warming is happening, humans are causing it, and if you don't agree you must be an idiot,' and I'm not an idiot!" While we may feel there are hundreds of sources of credible and complete information out there, I came to realize that from her point of view, it was not so easy to know where to turn without investing a lot more time than she was willing to on a topic that she recognized as important but that was not critical to her career or daily life.

I suspect many of us have friends or relatives in the same situation—I certainly have several—and so I thought I would use this column to promote a book that I think can help all of us (not published by AMS, unfortunately): *A Global Warming Primer: Answering Your Questions about the Science, the Consequences, and the Solutions*, by Jeffrey Bennett, is a slim volume of about 100 pages that covers all the basic issues of our changing climate in an easy-to-read question-and-answer format. The questions match those I have been asked many times by nonscientists and include the common arguments challenging human causes of climate change, as well as its impacts. It presents the answers with clear and accurate scientific explanations that are aimed at the educated layperson, treating the reader with respect but without compromising on the science. The book is freely available online at www.globalwarmingprimer.com, but you can order hardcopy books at this site as well.

I have recommended this book to many and have received positive reviews in every case. I plan to send a copy to the relative mentioned above and look forward to a follow-up conversation.



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