

To Bali, Back, and Beyond: Climate Policy fo

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Office of Senator Joseph Lieberman (I-CT)

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Congressional Fellows Alexander Barron and Holmes Hummel and Revelle Fellow L. Jeremy Richardson didn't anticipate traveling to Indonesia in December 2007, to join more than 10,000 participants at the 13th session of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). The international event, which included representatives from more than 180 countries, observers from intergovernmental and nongovernmental organizations, and the media, and culminated in the adoption of the Bali Road Map, was a highlight of their fellowship experience. All three also found their efforts addressing domestic climate policy exciting and valuable.

Alex, whose fellowship in the office of Senator Joseph Lieberman (I-CT) was sponsored by the American Chemical Society, and Holmes, whose fellowship in the office of Representative Jay Inslee (D-WA) was sponsored by AAAS, attended the Bali conference as members of the U.S. delegation, allowing them to directly observe closed-door negotiations between nations. Jeremy attended as an observer, thanks to his Revelle Fellowship at The Climate Project.



L to R: Alexander Barron, Holmes Hummel, L. Jeremy Richardson

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Prior to his fellowship, Alex taught courses in ecosystem ecology, environmental chemistry and global environmental change at Carleton College in Northfield, MN. His chief responsibility in Sen. Lieberman's office was to work on the Lieberman-Warner Climate Change Security Act (S.2191) – an economy-wide, cap-and-trade climate bill. He considers himself “very lucky” to have participated so directly in the policymaking process. The bill was introduced during his first week in the office, and he helped shepherd it through hearings, subcommittee and full committee markups, and months of negotiations before it reached the floor of the Senate.

“It was the first time comprehensive climate change legislation was reported from committee, brought to the floor and debated,” he said. The bill was tabled following a failed procedural motion, but “it awakened the Senate and a lot of other stakeholders,” Alex explained, “and prepared the groundwork for the next Congress.”

Holmes had previously worked on a range of energy and environment issues, engaging both private companies and public interest advocates. For her, the UNFCCC negotiations in Bali reinforced an urgent call to action for U.S. science policy professionals.

Explaining that paths to climate stabilization would require at least two thirds of the committees in Congress to make significant policy changes in their areas of jurisdiction, Holmes said, “We urgently need major policy responses over a sprawling range of areas such as scientific research, air quality, foreign aid, commerce, appropriations, education and workforce development.”

She pointed out that energy policies are surrogate instruments for driving technology transition. In the same week that international climate negotiators met in Bali, the U.S. Congress passed the Energy

Independence and Security Act, which she described as a turning point for the country.

Before his fellowship, Jeremy was at the American Astronomical Society where he coordinated public policy and government relations activities, tracked federal funding for astronomy research, and led grassroots lobbying efforts. Pursuing the Roger Revelle Fellowship in Global Stewardship was a path to refocus his professional efforts on policy solutions to climate change problems.

Jeremy attended the conference in Bali with The Climate Project through the U.S. Climate Action Network, one of the largest environmental nongovernmental organizations there. He found the experience “really amazing,” and it complemented his Revelle Fellowship activities, including researching different energy scenarios and helping design an initiative to create content for Google Earth. He was involved in developing the successful grant application to launch that effort in late 2008.

All three Fellows remain dedicated to engaging in climate change solutions, and all three caught “Potomac Fever.”

Alex accepted a position as a professional staff member for climate and energy with the House Committee on Energy and Commerce. “The fellowship allowed me to better understand the policy and political hurdles that must be cleared to enact climate legislation,” he explained.

Holmes initially returned to California to lead a university course and a professional series on climate policy design at UC Berkeley. In June 2009 she began her new post as senior policy advisor to the Department of Energy's Office of Policy and International Affairs.

Jeremy is now applying the knowledge gained through the Revelle Fellowship in his position as senior science policy fellow at the Pew Center for Global Climate Change.