



DUPONT SUMMIT 2013

..... Pressing Issues, Economic Realities

December 6, 2013 * Historic Whittemore House, Washington, DC

The Policy Studies Organization

Speaker

Vivian E. Thomson – *University of Virginia*

" Sophisticated Interdependence in Climate Policy: Federalism in the United States, Brazil, and Germany"

Since the Kyoto Protocol's signing in 1997 the United States has been the world's most prominent climate change outlaw. However, international pressure will not impel the US national government to enact a climate change law or adopt strong greenhouse gas regulations for stationary sources. The urge for climate change action must originate at home, and that motivation is not likely to result from additional scientific studies. Rather, action will come when the right political coalitions form.

The states hold an important key to a successful global warming solution, for practical and political reasons. In the United States air pollution policymaking starts and ends with the states, whose governmental units implement national programs. Further, the Clean Air Act's various provisions work only when lawmakers and regulators adapt requirements to state and local circumstances. To understand coalition building in the US climate change arena, we must therefore start with the states.

But we find ourselves in uncharted waters in the United States when it comes to state-national relations in climate change. Many states have developed climate change and renewable energy policies ahead of the national government. Lacking an overarching climate change law, the US Environmental Protection Agency is preparing to employ a little-used part of the Clean Air Act, Section 111(d), to regulate greenhouse gas emissions from large stationary sources like power plants. Section 111(d) revolves around state plans rather than uniform national standards.

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I propose for these new circumstances a framework for climate change policy in the United States called "sophisticated interdependence" that will help foster the coalition building so desperately needed in the US climate change arena. This framework rests on a nine-state analysis that shows which political and economic factors predispose US states to be active or passive in the climate change arena and on comparative descriptions of climate change and renewable energy programs in Germany and Brazil. Germany, Brazil, and the United States are three federal democracies with the highest GDPs and they are all vital to solving the world's climate change dilemmas.

This work offers a multi-dimensional description of institutions, public salience, parties, leaders, state-federal relations, and energy profiles in Germany and Brazil. Those descriptions aid in fleshing out a productive policy path for the United States, the industrial world's climate change laggard. In this work I draw on my insider's perspective as a former air pollution policymaker at the US Environmental Protection Agency and in Virginia, where I was member and Vice Chair of the State Air Pollution Control Board from 2002 to 2010.



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Biography

Dr. Vivian E. Thomson is Associate Professor in the Departments of Environmental Sciences and Politics at the University of Virginia, USA. Dr. Thomson is an environmental policy expert with 30 years of practical and academic experience at the local, state, national, and international levels (<http://www.shesource.org/experts/profile/dr.-vivian-e.-thomson>). At U. Va. she directs the interdisciplinary BA program Environmental Thought and Practice and the Panama Initiative. Her first book, *Garbage In, Garbage Out: Solving the Problems with Long-Distance Trash Transport* (University of Virginia Press, 2009), was hailed as an “outstanding book” and “a substantial contribution to the field of environmental policy.” From 2002 to 2010 she was Vice Chair and Member of the Virginia State Air Pollution Control Board as an appointee of Governors Mark Warner and Tim Kaine. She has been senior policy analyst and manager at the US Environmental Protection Agency. Dr. Thomson has published in law, environmental management, natural science, and ethics journals. She has been Distinguished Fulbright Chair at the University of Southern Denmark, Odense. Her next book, *Sophisticated Interdependence in Climate Policy: Federalism in the United States, Brazil, and Germany* (Anthem Press) is scheduled for publication in February 2014. Dr. Thomson’s language skills include Spanish, German, and Brazilian Portuguese.

