Are You a Member of the Flat Earth Society?

I once said that I care about the planet as much as the next guy, unless the next guy is Al Gore. Update: make it, unless the next guy is Al Gore ... or John Kerry.

Kerry, you may have heard, just said this about what used to be called global warming until it got too cold and they had to change the name to avoid looking ridiculous: “In a sense, climate change can now be considered the world’s largest weapon of mass destruction, perhaps even, the world’s most fearsome weapon of mass destruction.”

And I was worried about the old fashioned weapons of mass destruction – like dirty bombs terrorists would like to unleash in Times Square. Silly me.

Nonetheless, let me state the obvious: I’m not a scientist, so nothing you read here is an argument against climate change. I don’t know enough to make a case one way or another. But, at some level, I’ve always believed in climate change. The climate over millions of years has changed a lot. We had ice ages followed by warmer ages followed by ice ages followed by warmer ages. Are humans responsible, to some extent, for the current era of warming? Probably. Without humans and the factories they’ve built there’d be less carbons in the air. That’s obvious. Beyond that, I know very little.

But what bothers me about the climate change discussion is that the deck is stacked against anyone who has doubts about whether it’s really as bad as Gore and Kerry and others say it is. Are we really members of the Flat Earth Society, as Kerry recently said, if we have doubts?

To the true believers, the science is “settled.” Debate on
the subject is a waste of time. So Kerry said neither he nor the president plans to waste any more of their time on the subject. They don’t simply see climate change as a scientific issue. To them, it’s practically a religion; such is their devotion to the cause and their faith in the infallibility of experts on the subject. And so, to just about anyone who compares climate change to a weapon of mass destruction, everything is proof of climate change.

To them, very cold weather is proof of climate change. So is very hot weather.

More snow than usual is evidence of climate change. Less snow than usual is also evidence of climate change.

More hurricanes than the average number is the result of climate change. Fewer hurricanes than the average number is the result of climate change.

Floods? Climate change. Drought? Climate change.

In fact, when President Obama recently visited parts of California that have been hit hard by drought, he and his aides said what’s happening in the west could be the beginning of similar devastating weather across much of the entire United states as human-caused climate change intensifies.

But even a news story in the New York Times, a paper whose editorial page is constantly setting off alarms about the dire consequences of climate change, had this to say about the prediction made by the president and his aides: “But in [making such a prediction], they were pushing at the boundaries of scientific knowledge about the relationship between climate change and drought. While a trend of increasing drought that may be linked to global warming has been documented in some regions, including parts of the Mediterranean and in the Southwestern United States, there is no scientific consensus yet that it is a worldwide phenomenon. Nor is there definitive evidence that it is causing
California’s problems.”

Besides, as the New York Times reports, “the most recent computer projections suggest that as the world warms, California should get wetter, not drier, in the winter, when the state gets the bulk of its precipitation.” Uh oh!

So if climate change is such a no-brainer, if the science really is “settled,” why does the president feel the need to exaggerate at best and flat out mislead the American people at worst?

And even if, with the stroke of his pen, the president were to issue one of his executive orders to shut down every coal powered plant in the entire United States, it still wouldn’t have much effect on worldwide climate change. Not as long as India and China exist. They’re growing their economies like crazy and since coal is cheap, that’s what they’re using. They’ll worry about global warming some other time.

And why, we members of the Flat Earth Society, are wondering, is Team Obama making climate change such a big issue now? Could it be because Republicans didn’t stand in the way of a debt ceiling hike which could have led to another government shutdown, which would have been blamed on Republicans, just like the last one? Could it be the president needed another issue to rally his liberal base and divide the nation? Is that why, just months before the midterm elections, climate change has just become “the world’s largest weapon of mass destruction”?

But here’s the bad news for those who believe climate change will end the world as we know it: The American people aren’t nearly as worked up over it. In a recent Gallup poll of issues we care most about, climate change didn’t finish in the top 10. And in a Pew poll it finished 19 out of 20.

The president may need to come up with another issue to rally his base and divide the nation. The midterm elections are
right around the corner. But beware, Mr. President: the last time a presidential administration warned us about weapons of mass destruction, there was nothing there.

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Let me know what you think by leaving a comment. How much, or how little, do you care about global warming, or climate change, or whatever they’ll be calling it next week? Thanks.