

# Global Debates by the Numbers

*By Victoria Baxter, Director of The People Speak*

Sometimes, being green is a lonely endeavor. Al Gore isn't around cheering me on when I decide to walk rather than drive. No one (thankfully) is in the bathroom commending me for turning off the water while brushing my teeth. At times, I have to admit, I wonder what difference all these little actions make. Worse is when I start to wonder if I'm the only one that cares.

Then I think about the incredible energy that came out of the Global Debates on lowering carbon emissions and I realize I'm not alone. Think about it – this October, 600 schools in 70 countries held public debates about the best way to lower carbon emissions. My best estimate is that 50,000 young people took part in the Global Debates. Doesn't it feel great to be part of a truly global discussion?

What's even better, we now have over 50 video Public Service Announcements (PSAs) submitted by students. That's almost an hour's worth of inspirational videos to keep all of us going in our quest to lower carbon emissions and address climate change. Check out the PSAs and see: a "Green Diva" in Chile; students from Brother Rice High School in Michigan who know a thing or two about renewable energy; savvy Madison, Mississippi consumers who get the "priceless" value of addressing climate change; and some very interesting dancing feet from Moldova. You can check out all of these videos online at: [www.thepeoplespeak.org/globaldebates](http://www.thepeoplespeak.org/globaldebates).

Students also sent in their original creative blog posts about how they lower carbon emissions in their own lives and the reasons why everyone else should too. We'll be featuring all of these great posts and PSAs online throughout January and February. Stop by [www.thepeoplespeak.org](http://www.thepeoplespeak.org) to check them out.

I'm really looking forward to March's Global Debates on water. The resolution is: "Resolved: Water should be considered national property." Here are some numbers to get us thinking about how important this topic is:

- One ton of recycled paper saves 3,700 pounds of lumber and 24,000 gallons of water.
- Little leaks add up. A leaky faucet dripping at a rate of one drop per second over the course of year adds up to about the same amount of water as a small above ground pool!
- In the developing world, over 50% of the hospital beds are occupied by people suffering from preventable diseases caused by unsafe water and poor sanitation.
- On average, women and girls in developing countries walk almost four miles a day, carrying 5 gallons of water back to their families.
- Global policymakers are estimating that more than 50 countries on five continents might face conflicts based on access to water. Tensions over access to water are already happening between U.S. states.



There are even more resources, facts and figures to help you plan your March Global Debate on water at [www.ThePeopleSpeak.org/globaldebates](http://www.ThePeopleSpeak.org/globaldebates). The new toolkit will be out in March and will provide all you need to organize a public debate in your high school. Our new points activities will provide you will ideas to become even more aware and active on the issue of water. I look forward to hearing from you all in another successful Global Debates!

Don't forget that participating in the March Global Debates and completing the points activities will greatly increase your chances of winning one of 10 trips to the UN Foundation Youth Leadership Summit at the United Nations this July 16-19, 2008. We're working hard to create an informative and interactive summit. You'll have the chance to learn more about the work of the UN, meet high ranking officials, and other opportunities.