

EDITORIALS NOVEMBER 26, 2016 9:00 PM

# Climate action far from dead in Washington

*The Olympian Editorial Board*

---

There is ample reason for pessimism about the U.S. taking appropriate steps against climate change after the Nov. 8 election.

President-elect Donald Trump has spoken out against the recent global greenhouse gas agreement and vowed to repeal President Obama's clean power plan that would clamp down on emissions from coal-fired electricity plants.

Then the Republican was reported to be considering an outright climate-denier, one who thinks global warming might be a good thing, to lead the Environmental Protection Agency.

Outlandish is one way of describing that possibility. Stupid, reckless and head-in-the-sand are others.

But jumping off a cliff is not an option for those who worry about the impact of letting the globe

warm up, which is expected to raise sea levels, shift ocean alkalinity toward acidity, disrupt weather and propel more forest fires.

Yoram Bauman, sponsor of Initiative 732's carbon tax that Washington voters rejected this month, is certainly not giving up, and neither should anyone else.

"Our campaign all along said, 'We're going to take a swing at the ball,' and we did that. But the game is not over," Bauman said after the election. "Our group and other folks will look for other opportunities to try to take action."

If one looks closer at the rejection of I-732, one sees it was driven in part on a major schism in the ranks of environmentalist and labor groups over the best solution to reducing emissions of greenhouse gases in the Evergreen State.

That same coalition of labor and environmental groups that opposed I-732 is continuing to talk about another option. This could involve an initiative imposing a cap and trade system like California has, rather than the carbon tax that British Columbia has.

Also, the same voters who rejected I-732 also strongly re-elected Gov. Jay Inslee, the Democrat, and in some ways leading champion of state action to curb fossil fuel emissions that contribute to global warming.

The West Coast is positioned to play a unique role in the public debate over how to position the economy to account for the costs of carbon-fuel emissions.

Just a week ago, as the United Nations Climate Conference was winding up in Marrakesh, Morocco, Inslee jointed Oregon Gov. Kate Brown, California Gov. Edmund G. Brown Jr. and British Columbia Premier Christy Clark in issuing a statement that recognized the importance of sticking to the Paris Agreement that took effect this fall.

“In California, Oregon, Washington and British Columbia — from the Mexican border to the edge of the Yukon Territory — we stand with the international community. Our success demonstrates that taking action on climate change goes hand-in-hand with robust job creation and a thriving clean-energy economy,” the governors said. “We know what’s at stake because we have seen the destruction firsthand — from year-round wildfires and historic drought to devastating sea-level rise. These impacts don’t respect borders or wait for the next election.”

The governors were vague in saying exactly what kind of mobilization for action is in the works.

We have not given up on the wisdom of a carbon tax, which can send a gradually louder signal to the economy that it will be cheaper over the long term to reduce the cost of emissions.

There is, interestingly enough, a national movement called the Citizens’ Climate Lobby that is pushing such a tax. An Olympia chapter formed recently, and its advocates have begun

organizing and talking to members of Congress about their fee and dividend proposal.

Chances are slim to none for action in the current — and 2017 — versions of the U.S. House and Senate. But the conversation must continue.

At the state level, the coalition that wants to tax carbon emission and reinvest in clean energy projects has an uphill fight at the state Legislature.

Both ideas may be answers: one national, one local. Or a hybrid.

We favored I-732's passage because the long-term threat of climate change is sufficient to justify putting a price immediately on carbon emissions.

We thought, and still think, Washington can help lead the nation toward a smaller carbon footprint by showing how it can be done without harming the economy.

Carry on, we say. Do good things. Keep working for a plan to curb emissions.

---

---

## RELATED CONTENT

---



## MORE EDITORIALS

---

SUGGESTED FOR YOU

COMMENTS

---