



Citizens' Climate Lobby

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New IPCC report: Delay is no longer an option to avoid climate change calamity

With the latest IPCC report saying drastic action is needed to stay within the 1.5 C threshold on global warming, Congress must quickly enact a fee on carbon to reduce the heat trapping emissions behind the problem. Returning revenue to households will achieve that objective while protecting the economy.

The [latest report](#) from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) offers a grim assessment of the impact we can expect in a world that warms more than 1.5 degrees Celsius: Food shortages, coastal flooding, mass migrations, ferocious storms,

bigger and more intense wildfires, and unbearable heat that could make some parts of the world unlivable. In short, we have 12 years to drastically reduce greenhouse gas emissions before we ensure the demise of civilization as we know it.

We are only decades away from reaching the 1.5 C threshold, and millions are already feeling the impact of climate change today. Regarding [wildfires out West](#), for example, climate scientist Michael Mann said, "We're not saying that climate change is literally causing the events to occur. What we can conclude with a great deal of confidence now is that climate change is making these events more extreme."

In the Carolinas last month, [Hurricane Florence left an estimated \\$22 billion in damage](#), most of it from flooding caused by record rainfall. Climate change made Florence more destructive because warmer air holds and releases more water. Sea level rise, also attributable to global warming, increased the storm surge from Florence. [Changes in the jet stream](#), which scientists attribute to a warmer Arctic, also caused Florence to linger for several days and deposit more rain.

The good news is that it is possible for the world to keep from blowing past the 1.5 C mark. The not-so-good news is that capping that extra warmth at 1.5 C will require an unprecedented effort on the part of all nations to radically transform, in a short period of time, the ways we power our lives and move people and goods from one place to another.

How short a period of time? The report says greenhouse pollution will need to be reduced 45 percent below 2010 levels by 2030 and reach net zero by 2050.

No help from the White House

Despite these dire realities, President Trump's White House has gone to great lengths to reverse President Obama's earlier initiatives to combat climate change. After merely two months in office, Trump signed an executive order mandating the EPA to review the Clean Power Plan, which the agency has since [moved to replace](#). He notoriously announced the United States will pull out of the international [Paris Climate Agreement](#), making it the only country in the world not to be on board. This summer Trump loosened Obama-era [vehicle emissions standards](#), and just last month, he reversed a [regulation to limit methane pollution](#), a greenhouse gas with even more warming potential than carbon dioxide. It's clear that, at this time, the executive branch is nothing less than hostile to climate progress.

The most likely place for lasting climate action to take place is the legislative branch. Congress must take the lead and enact a straightforward, steadily rising price on carbon. This is a topic that doesn't have to succumb to the bitterly partisan atmosphere of today — in fact, it could be a bridge issue to find bipartisan common ground. In order to make it through both chambers of Congress and successfully secure this president's signature, bipartisanship is the only way.

A Nobel winner's solution

The regulatory policies from the Obama administration to rein in carbon pollution were initiated out of frustration with the lack of legislative solutions emerging from Congress. Obama himself said he would have preferred the market-based approach of pricing carbon, which most economists agree is the best way to address climate change.

One of those economists, William Nordhaus of Yale, just won the [Nobel Prize in Economics](#) for his work detailing the relationship between climate change and the economy. Reporting on the Nobel award, the [Guardian](#) said, "Nordhaus has been a prominent advocate of the use of a uniformly applied carbon tax as the best way to put a true cost on the use of burning fossil fuels and so reducing greenhouse gas emissions."

Nordhaus is hardly an outlier among his economic peers. In a [report](#) from the Carbon Pricing Leadership Coalition, 13 leading economists said, "A well-designed carbon price is an indispensable part of a strategy for reducing emissions in an efficient way."

What constitutes a "well-designed carbon price"? A legislative proposal from Citizens' Climate lobby — [Carbon Fee and Dividend](#) — would achieve significant reductions in greenhouse gas emissions without putting a drag on the economy.

How Carbon Fee and Dividend works

Carbon Fee and Dividend is a simple, fair and effective policy with support from scientists, economists, and climate activists. It's our best real option for solving climate change. Here's how it works:

- **Assess a fee** on the amount of carbon dioxide (or CO₂ equivalent) of fossil fuels, starting at \$15 per ton and increasing every year. To generate the deep emissions reductions necessary according to the IPCC report, we would need a steep rate of increase and, ultimately, a very high price per ton. The steady increase sends a predictable signal to businesses, who can immediately plan for that high-fee, low-carbon future.

- **Return the revenue** from that fee equally to all households as a monthly dividend. As the price per ton of carbon rises to the necessary levels, using the revenue this way will ensure the policy remains politically viable — as the fee increases, the dividend does too. Most people will end up receiving more from the monthly dividend than they will pay for increased energy costs, so the policy will boost consumer spending and generate job growth.
- **Apply a Border Carbon Adjustment** on imports from nations that do not have an equivalent price on carbon. The Border Carbon Adjustment protects American businesses by keeping them competitive and encouraging equivalent carbon prices around the globe.

A [study done by Regional Economic Models, Inc.](#), looked at the Carbon Fee and Dividend proposal and found that, after 20 years, the policy would reduce CO2 emissions 50 percent below 1990 levels. The REMI study also found that 2.8 million jobs would be added over that time.

No other climate solution on the table today can virtually guarantee to slash America's emissions, put money in people's pockets, help businesses prepare for the future, and enjoy support from voters on both sides of the aisle. It is a winning path forward for Congress, and they should stride confidently down that path.

Political will for bipartisan solution

The partisan gulf seems glaring these days, but on climate change, the opposite is true. A larger and larger group of representatives are standing on common ground in the bipartisan [Climate Solutions Caucus](#), which just reached 90 members last week. That's 45 Republicans and 45 Democrats all committed to finding climate solutions they can agree on.

In fact, three Republicans in that group are co-sponsors of [a House bill to put a price on carbon](#). Rep. Carlos Curbelo (FL) introduced the MARKET CHOICE Act in July of this year, and Rep. Brian Fitzpatrick (PA) and Rep. Francis Rooney (FL) quickly signed on as co-sponsors. This is the first major Republican-led climate bill in nearly a decade.

Outside of the legislature, advocacy groups like the Climate Leadership Council, Students for Carbon Dividends, and Americans for Carbon Dividends are working to increase awareness and support for revenue-neutral carbon pricing. Citizens' Climate Lobby reached more than 100,000 supporters this year, organized in hundreds of local chapters across the country, all spreading the word in their communities and making sure their members of Congress hear them loud and clear.

And those efforts are working. Recent public opinion polling from the Yale Program on Climate Change Communication [shows nationwide majority support](#) for revenue-neutral carbon taxes. The tide is turning. The time for this solution is now.

Can't hit the snooze button on this alarm

Ever since Dr. James Hansen delivered his [headline-grabbing testimony](#) on climate change before the Senate in 1988, scientists have sounded the alarm repeatedly about the consequences of doing nothing to reduce the heat-trapping emissions warming our planet. In the intervening decades, their warnings were met with lackluster responses from governments throughout the world — the U.S. in particular — that hit the snooze button each time those alarms went off.

Carbon Fee and Dividend is a win-win for both the climate and the economy. There is no reason why Democrats and Republicans should not come together to enact this policy in the next Congress.

Since President Trump's announcement that he would withdraw the U.S. from the Paris Climate Agreement, our nation has gone from leader to laggard. In passing Carbon Fee and Dividend, however, Congress can restore America's leadership in solving climate change and also provide the incentive for other nations to do better. While it is not the only solution needed to keep global temperatures within manageable limits, it is by far the most important first step to preserve a livable world for ourselves, our children, and our grandchildren.