



**FOR MORE INFORMATION: STEVE VALK, STEVE.VALK@CITIZENSCLIMATELOBBY.ORG;
404.769.7461**

Beyond Cancun: U.S. can lead effort to stop climate change and boost economy, too

Later this month, U.S. negotiators will travel to Cancun, Mexico, to participate in U.N. climate talks. Expectations for the meeting couldn't be lower, especially given that the 111th Congress will adjourn without enacting legislation to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. With no commitment from the U.S. to lower carbon dioxide, another year passes without a global treaty to reverse the disastrous process of climate change.

Meanwhile, the clock ticks as the world approaches what scientists call the tipping points on climate change, beyond which catastrophic consequences are all but guaranteed. Such consequences as:

- The collapse of polar ice sheets, raising sea levels to the point where coastal areas are swamped, displacing hundreds of millions of families;
- The disappearance of glaciers that provide water for a billion people;
- Severe droughts that cause food shortages and famine;
- Acidification of the oceans that destroys the base of the food chain in the seas.

As Bolivia's U.N. ambassador Pablo Solon, put it: "We're going to see how politics in one state is going to define the entire future of humankind."

It's time for America to demonstrate the kind of leadership we provided in the middle of the 20th Century when tyrannical forces threatened to take over the world. Now, however, we must liberate humanity from the tyranny of carbon-based fuels, which foul our air and water and accelerate global warming.

The next Congress can speed the transition to clean energy – and freedom from fossil fuels – by enacting legislation that places a direct fee on carbon-based energy at the source, increasing each year so that solar, wind and other forms of clean energy are cheaper than coal and oil within 10 years. If the revenue from this carbon fee is returned to all Americans, the transition to clean energy can be made without inflicting economic hardship on households. With a clear price signal, investments will pour into green technology, creating millions of jobs and driving the American economy well into the 21st Century.

Pricing carbon will add jobs

Whenever it appears that legislation to address climate change might be gaining traction, the fossil fuel lobby trots out a familiar canard: Pricing carbon will kill jobs and ruin the economy. Politicians on Capitol Hill are then quickly cowed into retreat, and action to reduce greenhouse gases is tabled for another session, as happened in the Senate this summer.

The next time special interests yell “job killer,” however, members of Congress should refer to a report from Citizens Climate Lobby (CCL) about the economic effect of weaning our nation off carbon-based energy. In [“Building a Green Economy: The Economics of Carbon Pricing & the Transition to Clean, Renewable Fuels.”](#) Joseph Robertson ties together numerous reports and case studies to present a different picture, one in which the transition to clean energy will produce new jobs and provide a stimulus to the economy.

Some of the more eye-opening facts presented:

- Germany’s shift to carbon-based taxing at the start of the century has unleashed hundreds of billions of dollars in investments for clean energy. Germany now leads the world in exporting wind-energy technology, controlling 70 percent of the global market.
- Federal stimulus funding and the incentive of putting a price on carbon would result in annual investments of \$150 billion in clean energy over the next decade.
- Millions of new jobs would be created in industries ranging from manufacturing to installation and maintenance, as well as administration, marketing, energy efficiency and other related fields.
- Studies comparing cost-benefit analysis for mountaintop removal mining and wind energy show wind is more effective at generating prosperity over the long term.
- According to the Department of Energy, by 2030, 20 percent of the nation’s energy will be provided by wind, generating 500,000 jobs.

In addition, returning revenue from a carbon fee to all Americans would enhance the economic benefit of pricing carbon. Under a carbon fee and dividend approach proposed by CCL and others, about 70 percent of all households would get back as much or more than they would pay

Highlights of Carbon Fee and Dividend

Carbon fee starts at \$15 per ton of CO₂ on fossil fuels at mine, well or port of entry.

Fee increases each year by at least \$10 per ton of CO₂. Aim to reduce U.S. CO₂ emissions by 2050 to 10% of 1990 levels. Yearly increase can go to \$15 if needed.

100% of revenue returned by monthly payment or payroll tax reduction.

Border tariffs imposed on goods from countries that don’t have equivalent carbon pricing. Tariff revenue given as rebates to U.S. businesses exporting to countries without equivalent carbon pricing.

Fossil fuel subsidies phased out within 5 years.

No new coal-fired power plants permitted without carbon capture and storage proven safe and effective.

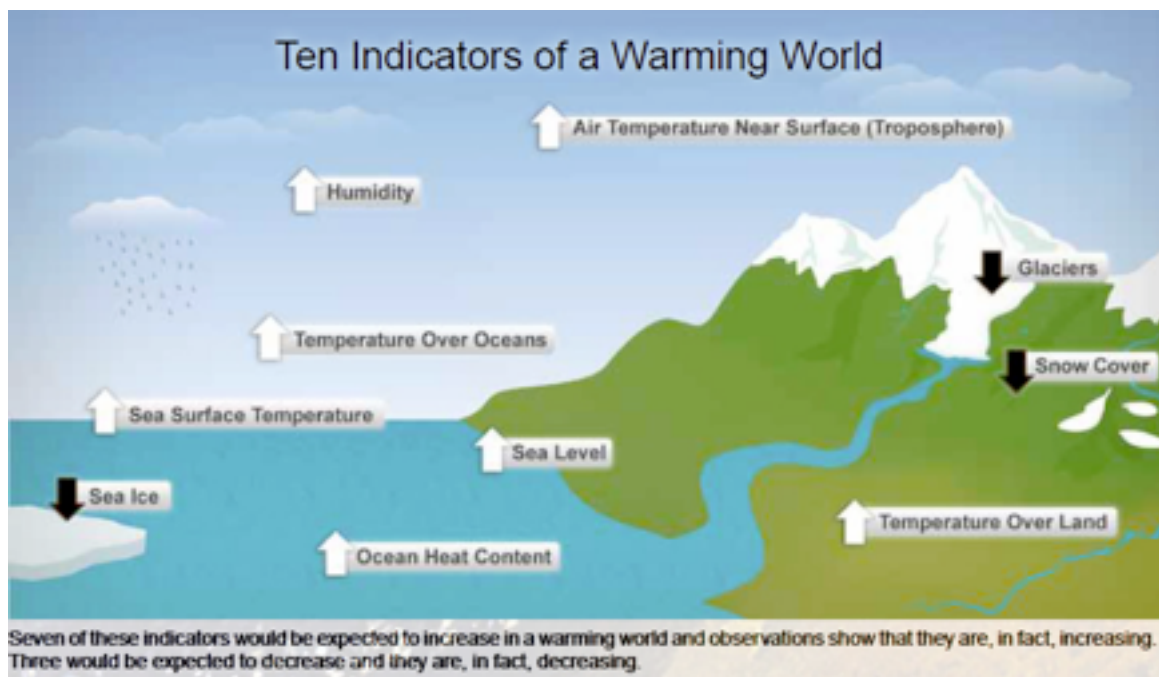
President seeks treaties with other countries to adopt similar measures to reduce CO₂.

for increased energy costs associated with the carbon fee. Meanwhile, a clear price signal on carbon will release hundreds of billions of dollars in clean-energy investments as wind, solar and other renewables become competitive with fossil fuels.

Another economic factor to consider, of course, is the cost of NOT taking action to mitigate climate change. Over the last year, [record-setting floods](#) – including one in Nashville that left the Grand Ole Opry’s stage under water – have caused billions of dollars in damage across the U.S. As the Earth gets warmer, scientists say, the atmosphere holds and discharges more water, increasing the severity and frequency of extreme weather events. Looking at the other end of extreme weather, unless carbon emissions are curtailed, the heat and drought seen in Russia this summer will become more commonplace, threatening food supplies in a world where more than a billion people already suffer from hunger.

What the science is telling us

While there are numerous reasons for the failure to enact climate legislation, one that stands out prominently is the mistaken impression that the science is not settled on global warming and its causes. It’s time for the media and others who inform the public on this topic to put that notion to rest. In paper after paper – written by actual climate scientists and peer-reviewed – the conclusion is always the same: the Earth is warming and increased carbon dioxide from the burning of fossil fuels is the primary cause. When these facts are disputed, the skepticism comes from [“experts”](#) who often write for think tanks that receive funding from coal, oil and electric utility sources, industries that profit from the status quo.



From NOAA’s “State of the Climate 2009”

Several reports of late confirm the urgent need to implement effective policies to mitigate climate change.

In late July, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration issued its [“State of the Climate 2009”](#) report. More than 300 scientists from 160 research groups in 48 countries contributed to the report, which “confirms that the past decade was the warmest on record and that the Earth has been growing warmer over the last 50 years.”

Deke Arndt, co-editor of the report and chief of the Climate Monitoring Branch of NOAA’s National Climatic Data Center, says the increased temperature has already altered the planet. “Glaciers and sea ice are melting, heavy rainfall is intensifying and heat waves are more common. And, as the new report tells us, there is now evidence that over 90 percent of warming over the past 50 years has gone into our ocean.”

Warming of the oceans appears to pose a new threat to Earth’s ecosystem. A new study finds the number of phytoplankton, the foundation of the food chain in the seas, has decreased by 40 percent since 1950. Reporting on the study, the [Christian Science Monitor](#) wrote:

“Phytoplankton use sunlight to convert carbon dioxide into oxygen and into the sugars that keep the plankton alive long enough to become another creature's meal. By some estimates ocean phytoplankton are responsible for half of all the photosynthetic activity on the planet.”