Interfaith Power & Light

A Religious Response to Global Warming

Capping Carbon in 2010

Interfaith Power & Light Priorities

As you may have just read in the news, this past decade (2000-2009) was the warmest on record, easily surpassing the previous hottest decade — the 1990s. An economy-wide cap on greenhouse gas emissions is the first essential step toward protecting God's creation from catastrophic climate change.

When international leaders reconvene at the end of 2010 to try to seal a global climate deal, the U.S. will be looked to once again for leadership. We need to show that we are serious about reducing our own global warming pollution, by passing legislation in Congress this spring. In so doing, we will pave the way for a clean energy revolution and create millions of new American jobs.

We need strong climate and energy legislation including a declining cap on carbon emissions coupled with incentives to jumpstart the clean energy revolution. Our new energy investments will create jobs and provide energy security.

Faith communities and religious leaders across the U.S. are urging our senators to move quickly to pass a bill that will avoid catastrophic climate change that threatens the earth's ecosystems and especially its most vulnerable inhabitants.

Interfaith Power & Light supports a policy of reducing global emissions to levels consistent with scientific recommendations, while facilitating a rapid transition to a clean energy future. Effective climate legislation must also be equitable and just, providing access for all to the new clean energy economy, and protecting vulnerable people and communities from the unavoidable impacts of global warming.

Your senators need to hear from you! Urge them to support climate legislation that:

- Includes mandatory, declining emissions targets consistent with scientific recommendations
- Focuses on energy efficiency – the cheapest, fastest and cleanest way to reduce emissions
- Includes a strong renewable energy standard
- Auctions emissions permits to avoid windfall profits for polluters and create a stream of revenue for public-purpose programs, such as adaptation and forest protection
- Eliminates the "coal loophole" from the House bill. Dirty coal plants are one of the largest sources of greenhouse gas emissions and air pollution and must clean up their act

For more information on the proposed Senate legislation, how to contact your senator and resources to help you become more energy efficient, please visit **www.InterfaithPowerandLight.org**.

Global Warming Facts and Projections

1. Global warming is unequivocal and primarily human-induced.
Global temperature has increased over the past 50 years. This observed increase is due primarily to human-induced emissions of heat-trapping gases.

2. Climate changes are underway in the United States and are projected to grow.
Climate-related changes are already observed in the United States and its coastal waters. These include increases in heavy downpours, rising temperature and sea level, rapidly retreating glaciers, thawing permafrost, lengthening growing seasons, lengthening ice-free seasons in the ocean and on lakes and rivers, earlier snowmelt, and alterations in river flows. These changes are projected to grow.

3. Widespread climate-related impacts are occurring now and are expected to increase.
Climate changes are already affecting water, energy, transportation, agriculture, ecosystems, and health. These impacts are different from region to region and will grow under projected climate change.

4. Climate change will stress water resources.
Water is an issue in every region, but the nature of the potential impacts varies. Drought, related to reduced precipitation, increased evaporation, and increased water loss from plants, is an important issue in many regions, especially in the West. Floods and water quality problems are likely to be amplified by climate change in most regions. Declines in mountain snowpack are important in the West and Alaska where snowpack provides vital natural water storage.

5. Crop and livestock production will be increasingly challenged.
Agriculture is considered one of the sectors most adaptable to changes in climate. However, increased heat, pests, water stress, diseases, and weather extremes will pose adaptation challenges for crop and livestock production.

6. Coastal areas are at increasing risk from sea-level rise and storm surge.
Sea-level rise and storm surge place many U.S. coastal areas at increasing risk of erosion and flooding, especially along the Atlantic and Gulf Coasts, Pacific Islands, and parts of Alaska. Energy and transportation infrastructure and other property in coastal areas are very likely to be adversely affected.

7. Threats to human health will increase.
Health impacts of climate change are related to heat stress, waterborne diseases, poor air quality, extreme weather events, and diseases transmitted by insects and rodents. Robust public health infrastructure can reduce the potential for negative impacts.

8. Climate change will interact with many social and environmental stresses.
Climate change will combine with pollution, population growth, overuse of resources, urbanization, and other social, economic, and environmental stresses to create larger impacts than from any of these factors alone.

9. Thresholds will be crossed, leading to large changes in climate and ecosystems.
There are a variety of thresholds in the climate system and ecosystems. These thresholds determine, for example, the presence of sea ice and permafrost, and the survival of species, from fish to insect pests, with implications for society. With further climate change, the crossing of additional thresholds is expected.

10. Future climate change and its impacts depend on choices made today.
The amount and rate of future climate change depend primarily on current and future human-caused emissions of heat-trapping gases and airborne particles. Responses involve reducing emissions to limit future warming, and adapting to the changes that are unavoidable.

Source: U.S. Global Change Research Program -- www.globalchange.gov