

Why Do We Need a Climate Bill?

Scientists, business leaders, and governments worldwide have united in the conviction that global climate change is real, is human-made, and will have disastrous economic, environmental, and social consequences if left unchecked.

What are the projected consequences of climate change?

Climate change alters the ecosystems that all life depends upon. As the planet's climate-regulating systems are further disrupted, the negative impacts will increase. Hundreds of millions of people worldwide will be affected by water shortages, increased disease, more frequent and extreme storm systems, and coastal flooding. Food shortages will result from extended droughts and heavier rains (dry areas are predicted to get drier, wet areas wetter). The costs to our government will be in the trillions of dollars. A blue-ribbon panel of retired U.S. military leaders has warned that climate change will increase geopolitical instability and act as a "threat multiplier" for our national security.

More than 2,500 climate experts from 80 countries gathered in Copenhagen earlier this year for an emergency summit to warn political leaders that climate change and GHG emissions are accelerating beyond their previous predictions. Among the findings revealed at the conference:

- Sea levels will rise twice as fast as prior official estimates had predicted.
- Modest warming could unleash a carbon "time bomb" from Arctic soils.
- A failure to cut emissions could render half of the world uninhabitable.

Why do we need federal climate legislation now?

The Nobel Prize winning Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) released a series of reports in 2007 that recommend reducing GHG emissions 80-90% by the year 2050 to avoid irreversible and dangerous planetary climate change. To do so, action must be taken by the year 2015 to stabilize emissions.

Since the IPCC issued its recommendations, 150 major corporations, including Shell and General Electric, have signed a petition calling for government-mandated cuts in GHG emissions in the United States. Across the U.S., cities, states, and regions have begun to act on their own to reduce emissions. A federal climate bill will level the playing field and create the market signals needed to ensure that GHG reductions are being made nationwide.

Why should the U.S. cut GHG emissions when China and India are refusing to do so?

China and India take the position that the developed nations are primarily responsible for current climate instability (According to the World Resources Institute, industrialized nations have contributed 80% of the buildup of carbon gases to date). Although China has surpassed the U.S. as the world's largest annual emitter of GHG, the U.S. still leads in annual emissions per capita—by a wide margin.

Because of their geographic locations, China and India will be among the nations hit hardest by the impacts of climate change. The best chance for a global agreement on cutting emissions is for the developed nations—particularly the U.S.—to show strong leadership.

Won't a cap on carbon emissions result in higher costs being passed to Americans?

Any policy that puts a price on GHG emissions will increase costs for industry and ultimately, for consumers. However, *good* climate legislation can protect household budgets from the burdensome price increases the energy industry is predicting. For example, a "cap and dividend" system that auctions 100% of allowances and allocates the generated revenue equally among consumers could significantly offset increases in energy bills.



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