

Carbon tax can work

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Regarding Tom Watkins' "Keep It Real" questioning carbon tax plans:

What rate? Start low: \$10 or \$15 per ton of carbon dioxide (about 15 cents per gallon of gas). Raise annually by \$10 per ton. Why? To prevent complaints, and prevent abrupt shocks to the economy. Predictable tax increases allow time to adjust operations, heating systems or transportation methods. The tax will rise until emissions drop adequately.

Starting low wastes time? Not really. Investors, inventors and entrepreneurs appreciate long-term price certainty. It'll immediately affect decisions. Really.

Watkins worries businesses will pass taxes plus extras to consumers. Really? He assumes businesses will opportunistically raise prices, overcharging without losing customers or attracting competitors. Really? For how long? Compared to warming's dangers, this isn't worrisome.

Please fret over real Americans' ignorance about warming. Waiting for Americans to voluntarily stop carbon-intensive behavior isn't a realistic plan.

Carbon-intensive products won't be producible? Watkins didn't mention warming makes concrete disintegrate faster. Will inventors find lower carbon processes for better materials?

Administrative costs? Collecting a national tax isn't expensive. When imposed at mine shaft, well or port, there are few taxpayers. Upstream taxes are really hard to evade.

Now, our real problem: State carbon taxes are inefficient compared with a national tax. Can reality-based New Englanders with burgeoning green businesses really persuade Congress to enact a carbon tax while Fox News reels off warming denials?

If New England's bipartisan congressional delegation sponsors a carbon tax with the Pacific Coast's delegation, it'll happen. California and Massachusetts are ranked one and two in clean tech leadership. A national carbon tax will enhance regional economies, creating jobs.

Now the surprise: Some congressional Republicans will sponsor this tax. Really! But they fear dark money retaliation. Please join Citizens' Climate Lobby to shield sponsors from vengeance. Help CCL make it real.

Judy Weiss

Brookline, Massachusetts

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