

Carbon tax tackles fossil fuels fairly

Emily Schwartz Greco describes “an explosion of new investment” into solar and wind, and the tremendous optimism that renewable energy is creating (“OtherWords: Gore moving to the bright side,” March 15). This optimistic trend makes it doubly infuriating to hear about building a new natural gas pipeline to carry gas that we don’t need (per a study commissioned by our attorney general), and to charge the public fees to pay construction costs. These fees constitute a wasteful, maddening tax.

Yet the governor is right: Now is the time to ask the public to support energy investment with an appropriate energy tax. But only one type of energy-related tax is logical: a carbon tax. A carbon tax would facilitate an orderly phase-out of fossil fuels, and would accelerate development of renewable energy.

The Legislature could use carbon tax revenues to prevent hardship and public anxiety. Some could help low-income communities afford energy efficiencies and solar installations. Some revenue could be returned to the public to offset the regressive nature of a carbon tax, and somehow Baker will need to alleviate the frustrations of apartment dwellers and renters who feel they have limited energy opportunities.

If the governor is itching to put his name on a new tax, make it a state carbon tax. Who knows? Maybe if Baker signs a carbon tax bill, he’ll also give Republicans in Congress the political cover to make a bright move on climate — they’ve spent too long on the dark side.

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