

David Sunderland

Boston, Mass. — To the editor:

I kept reading and rereading David Sunderland's oped column "Democrat fossil-fuel tax plan hurts the poor, middle class" and thinking-- why didn't you spell out the terms of the proposed legislation, and what do you propose as a Republican alternative for addressing climate change in Vermont that would be better than the plan Democrats proposed?

Sunderland never described the proposed legislation that he mocks. He doesn't mention that the bill's drafters are also concerned that a carbon tax will hurt the poor and middle classes, so they want most of the revenue to be used to shield the lower classes via cuts in Vermont's regressive sales tax. They also want the rest of the tax revenue to be used to help insulate homes and improve public transportation. Many environmental programs ignore the fact that wealthy people can buy electric cars and solar panels for their homes, reap tax credits and lower electricity bills, but low-middle income families don't have an extra \$50,000 to \$100,000 lying around ready to invest in solar panels, insulation or a fancy new car. Why doesn't Sunderland discuss ways in which climate change extreme events, like floods, hurt small businesses, and low and middle income families--often more than richer families?

I also wondered why a Republican like Sunderland doesn't begin by praising Vermont Democrats for using a Republican idea--a market-based carbon tax-- to deal with carbon emissions, instead of touting some type of command and control approach (like requiring everyone use public transportation, bicycles or dog sleds).

Mostly, Sunderland's approach seems so poorly timed. After many years of state and federal Republicans denying climate change and refusing to consider climate legislation, eleven House Republicans just introduced an environmental stewardship bill urging the House to study economically feasible policies that would curb human causes of climate change. This week New Hampshire Senator Kelly Ayotte announced her support for the EPA's clean power plan (the first Congressional Republican to publicly support the plan). Today Ayotte and three other Senate Republicans announced the formation of a Republican Green Coalition to discuss "how we can best protect our environment and climate, pursue common sense and market-based reforms to grow our

economy, and promote cleaner energy production."

When New England Republicans, of greater political stature and power than Sunderland, are working hard to design good climate policies and get themselves re-elected, why isn't Sunderland helping his party?

Rabbi Judy Weiss

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