

Demand more action on climate change

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Thank you for publishing Susan Atkinson's op-ed (Herald, Dec. 4) calling on Donald Trump to support climate change action. I was particularly interested that she quoted Thomas Jefferson: "The greatest good we can do for our country is to heal its party divisions and make them one people." Jefferson believed that only those who were independently wealthy could make unselfish decisions for the greater good of our country.

As a recent book on Jefferson and American politics says: "The Jeffersonian vision was an essentially libertarian one" and it was believed then that "the common good could be entrusted only to extremely wealthy people, on the assumption that since they wanted for nothing, they were naturally possessed of 'civic virtue,' the ability to act selflessly for the common good." (see Colin Woodard's American Character).

After the era of railroad barons, steel companies, Standard Oil and other monopolies being run by wealthy people who possessed little willingness to act selflessly for the common good, how can the public know which wealthy individuals to trust? If Jeffersonian-style wealthy fossil fuel magnates really acted for the common good, those wealthy people interested in the common good would be calling for clean energy, clean air and water, and carbon taxes to promote a fair and chaos-free transition.

In fact, Shell Oil's leadership supports Canada's plans for a carbon tax. In addition, the Rockefeller family spent years urging Exxon to disclose climate change impacts, decided to have their family foundations divest from Exxon stock, and they've funded efforts by Republican Bob Inglis to promote a national carbon tax.

They are acting in the common good, protecting us all from out-of-control climate change. In contrast, fossil fuel lobbyists are taking high profile positions in Trump's administration – because they're interested in safeguarding their fossil-fuel-dependent nest egg, not the common good.

Please call your members of Congress demanding support for the Clean Power Plan, and more serious climate change legislation. Fossil fuel lobbies are spending money to make money during Trump's administration. The public will have to spend time protecting our health, families and homes.

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