

Facing climate change

Your editorial “Fuzzy climate change accord” (Our Views, Dec. 16) makes several wonderful points. The main thing this climate accord between nearly 200 nations may accomplish is to convince Americans – whom President Obama was unable to convince – that climate change is a real concern requiring congressional attention. Excellent point. International pledges to cut emissions may spark private sector investment in research and clean energy development. Terrific point!

You also noted that just as it “is irresponsible to simply dismiss the issue, it is also irresponsible to ignore the economic havoc that could result if the world suddenly had to abandon the fossil fuels that provide cheap energy and sustain the economy.” Whoa! Suddenly abandoning fossil fuels isn’t wise. We need a policy that will create an orderly process of first discontinuing use of the most high-carbon fuels, and then methodically begin to discourage use of mid-level carbon fuels, and so on. Not all fossil fuels emit the same levels of pollutants.

What policy would provide a havoc-free transition and simultaneously encourage the development of plenty of clean affordable energy?

According to economists, businesses and fossil fuel companies, a carbon pricing system that charges fuel producers a fee based on the carbon content of their fuels is our best policy option. Take all the revenue, divvy it up and distribute it in equal shares to the public in order to shield low-middle income communities from rising prices.

Readers should tell Sen. Marco Rubio that they want him to introduce former Secretary of State George Shultz’s preferred carbon fee-and-dividend system.

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