

State carbon tax helps cause in many ways

To the editor:

Thank you for Cindy Luppi's July 19 op-ed supporting a state carbon tax, with rebates to the public, as a way to attain state emissions reductions without harming our economy, and because it'll inspire the rest of our country to support national carbon taxation. There are further reasons to support this legislation.

If we enact a state carbon tax, we show solidarity with California, with tougher goals than ours, a cap and trade program for utilities, carbon taxation on gasoline and additional emissions legislation pending. They're simultaneously dealing with drought, water shortages, wildfires, and a well-funded network of fossil fuel lobbies trying to stop their efforts (see Bloomberg Business' report on the Western State Petroleum Association). We must test our own creative carbon tax solution for them, perhaps even drawing the attention of lying lobbyists away from them.

A carbon tax plan will demonstrate solidarity with Florida's cities and counties that are trying to adapt to rising seas without help from their state government. It's easy to mock their governor's denialism, it's harder to be the first state to pass legislation that, once national, could slow seawater infiltration of aquifers, of sewers and toilet systems. Chaotic depopulation of Florida will be bad for all 50 states.

This proposal shows gratitude towards Republicans because it resembles their proposals: Ronald Reagan's system of dealing with CFCs, Sen. Susan Collins' 2010 cap and dividend legislation, former Rep. Bob Inglis' revenue-neutral carbon tax proposal, and George Shultz's call for a carbon fee and dividend. It shows gratitude by adapting their ideas for state use, setting the stage for them to take it to Congress. It's an environmental policy our governor can support, setting aside divisiveness over pipelines and natural gas usage.

Enacting a Massachusetts carbon fee acknowledges the research of our state's scientists who helped warn the world about the dangers we face. It shows appreciation to environmental organizations that fought to close coal power plants throughout the country, by enabling their efforts to move to a national, economy-wide level.

It demonstrates our love for our children and grandchildren. To paraphrase the pope: Concern for the environment in our backyards needs to be joined to sincere love for our fellow humans — here and in Florida, now and in the future — and an unwavering commitment to resolving the problems of society, from sea to shining sea.

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