

Wiess: We need to work harder to convince Congress to act

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Compelling arguments for Congressional climate change action were offered by Ernie Cohen in his Nov. 22 letter to the editor, but he omitted the strongest argument: Justice.

Scientists agree carbon dioxide emissions must be reduced to stabilize the climate and protect the long-term health and security of future generations, our children and grandchildren. However, cutting fossil fuel usage might hurt short-term interests of some businesses, investors, politicians, utility customers and trade associations.

Those with short-term financial interests in maintaining the status quo pressure Congress not to act, resulting in our children's long-term well-being unjustly compromised.

Is Congress biased against children? Of course, not. But we -- parents, grandparents, nurses, doctors, teachers, clergy, firefighters, newspaper editors -- must work harder to convince Congress the political will exists for equitable climate change legislation. Without demonstrable public support, Congress hesitates.

Become an activist

How can you persuade Congress that the political will exists? Attend marches to close coal-fired power plants. Protest pipelines. Divest. Or join me as a volunteer with Citizens Climate Lobby. We serve as a counterweight to paid, corporate fossil fuel lobbyists.

By writing letters to the editor, meeting with newspaper editorial boards, and visiting our Senators and representatives, we advocate for legislation for emissions reductions via energy efficiencies, the development of clean energy and other solutions the free market will support.

Our approach is straightforward, administratively easy, transparent, and fair. We want Congress to charge fossil fuel producers a fee based on the amount of emissions their products cause. Justice requires paying for one's pollution.

The government would collect the fees and send rebates to households so it would not be unjustly regressive, or drag the economy down by going into government coffers.

International effort

With an emissions fee, the private sector will shift investments into clean energy. The fee would also apply to imported goods to encourage international cooperation against climate change. Justice requires that nations work together.

CCL members understand that government will only protect us from climate change if we spend time studying the issue and informing our elected officials about optimal solutions. CCL has chapters nationwide, including Bridgeport, Providence and Boston. Please contact us for more information.

The Bible commands: Justice, Justice, you shall pursue. Justice must be pursued both by courtroom judges, and ordinary people, in the short- and long-term, for one's own family and others.

We might add: Justice must be sought in the streets and in the halls of Congress, for those already suffering from climate change droughts, rising seas, health impacts and severe weather, and for those at risk in the future.

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