

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

June 5, 2013

The President
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

We are writing to encourage you to discuss joint action to address climate change with Chinese President Xi Jinping during your upcoming summit in California.

Climate change is a profound threat to both nations and our window for preventing irreversible harm is rapidly closing. Together, the United States and China account for 43% of global carbon dioxide emissions. Cooperation with China is essential if we are to avoid catastrophic climate change. Both countries are independently taking initial steps to address carbon pollution and have established a bilateral working group on climate change, but negotiating an ambitious global climate agreement in 2015 remains crucial.

The summit with President Xi presents an opportunity to make real progress on climate change this year. We urge you to seek Chinese support for a proposal to use the Montreal Protocol to phase-down the production and use of hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs). This is an area where the United States and China should be able to work together to achieve significant climate benefits.

Unlike carbon dioxide, which remains in the atmosphere for hundreds of years, most HFCs have a relatively short lifetime in the atmosphere of a few years to a couple decades. Yet each molecule of these short-lived pollutants warms the atmosphere far more than a molecule of carbon dioxide over the period the molecule remains in the air.

The most common types of HFCs are more than a thousand times as potent as carbon dioxide in warming the planet. Scientists have predicted that if emissions of HFCs continue to grow, they could be responsible for 20% or more of the global atmospheric warming by 2050.

In 2009, the United States joined Mexico and Canada in proposing an amendment to the Montreal Protocol to phase down the production and use of HFCs. The amendment has not yet been adopted, but each year the North American proposal has gained support. In 2009, 41 nations supported the proposal; in 2011, this number grew to 108 nations. There is also broad support among U.S. stakeholders for the proposal.

This year, the United States, Mexico, and Canada have once again placed the HFC proposal on the agenda of the Meeting of the Parties in October. Adoption of the proposal would represent a significant victory for the climate. The Environmental Protection Agency estimates

that the HFC phase-down could reduce global emissions by over 84 gigatons of carbon dioxide equivalent through 2050. That is equal to more than twelve years of total U.S. heat-trapping emissions.

We encourage you to raise HFCs with President Xi and to ask for his support of the North American HFC proposal. This would send a powerful and concrete message about the ability of United States and China to cooperate to address the enormous challenge of climate change.

We admire and appreciate your leadership on climate change and pledge to do all we can to support your efforts.

Sincerely,



Henry A. Waxman
Co-Chair
Bicameral Task Force on Climate Change
Ranking Member
House Committee on Energy and Commerce



Sheldon Whitehouse
Co-Chair
Bicameral Task Force on Climate Change
Chairman
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Committee Environment and Public Works



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