



COALITION ON THE ENVIRONMENT
AND JEWISH LIFE



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Bicameral Task Force on Climate Change
Rep. Henry A. Waxman and Sen. Sheldon Whitehouse, Co-chairs

February 20, 2013

Dear Senators Waxman and Whitehouse:

Thank you for requesting our input. The Coalition on the Environment and Jewish Life (COEJL) and Jewish Council for Public Affairs (JCPA) are pleased to respond to the Task Force's request for input on federal policy responses to climate change.

COEJL deepens and broadens the Jewish community's commitment to the stewardship and protection of the earth. COEJL has been an initiative at the Jewish Council for Public Affairs since 1993. Through a network of 27 national organizations (including all major denominations) and 125 community agencies, COEJL is mobilizing the Jewish community to address today's energy and climate change crisis. Through its role in the National Religious Partnership for the Environment (NRPE), COEJL works closely with our colleagues at the Evangelical Environmental Network, National Council of Churches, and US Conference of Catholic Bishops. JCPA is the public affairs arm of the organized Jewish community and serves as the national coordinating and advisory body for the 14 national and 125 local agencies comprising the field of Jewish community relations.

Today, COEJL's priorities are to mobilize the Jewish community to address the climate crisis through advocacy for appropriate legislation as well as action to reduce our own greenhouse gas emissions. COEJL challenges and supports Jewish organizations to pursue sustainability in their facilities, operations and programs in order to protect the earth for future generations.

COEJL's Jewish Energy and Environment Imperative, signed by over 50 Jewish community leaders in 2012, states that "the need to transform the world's energy economy while addressing global climate change is not only a religious and moral imperative, it is a strategy for security and survival." Next month, COEJL is bringing

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together 15 activists through the Jewish Energy Network to train Jewish leaders in being advocates for sustainable energy. COEJL also chairs the Green Hevra, a network of 16 Jewish environmental organizations.

COEJL's recommendations to the Task Force are consistent with various policies it shares with JCPA, including the following documents which are attached: the JCPA "Resolution on Hydrofracking" of 2012, representing consensus of JCPA member agencies; "COEJL's Working Principles on Current Energy Challenges" of 2012; the "Jewish Community Priorities for Climate and Energy Policy", which were endorsed in 2008 by ten Jewish organizations; and "Global Warming: A Jewish Response" of 2000.

1. What actions or policies could federal agencies adopt, using existing authorities, to reduce emissions of heat-trapping pollution?

The Environmental Protection Agency should finalize its rules for the Carbon Pollution Standard for New Power Plants. The Environmental Protection Agency should move forward with the process to implement a Carbon Pollution Standard for Existing Power Plants, minimizing further delay.

2. What actions or policies could federal agencies adopt, using existing authorities, to make our nation more resilient to the effects of climate change?

COEJL would like to draw attention to the facts that both climate change itself and policies taken to address it present a disproportionate burden on the poor. Domestically, rising energy and gas prices will unduly burden those with inelastic incomes. The NAACP has pointed out that African Americans are proportionately more likely than other Americans to suffer from heat-related death and asthma, both of which are expected to increase due to global warming.

Vulnerable nations will have the least capacity to cope with the devastating impacts of extreme weather events, rise in sea level, drought, disruption of water and food supplies, impacts on health, and the destruction of natural resources. Some of these impacts will disproportionately affect women, who around the world grow an average of 45 to 90 percent of food consumed in the home but own less than two percent of property and commonly have less access to credit than men. Women are also more likely to live in poor housing conditions and without air conditioning.

The Jewish commitment to justice demands that we support policies that address these inequities both in the United States and abroad.

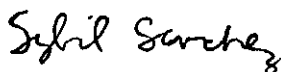
3. What legislation would you recommend Congress enact to strengthen the ability of federal agencies to prevent and respond to the effects of climate change?

A legislative framework designed to address greenhouse gas emissions comprehensively would be ideal. COEJL and JCPA urge adopting policies that use pricing – including the taxation of pollution – to lower demand for fossil fuels, encourage the development of non-polluting energy sources, and raise revenue for public projects, such as mass transit, that would lower carbon emissions. There are other important steps that Congress can take in the absence of a comprehensive framework, such as a Renewable Electricity Standard requiring that at least 15% of our domestic electricity production come from renewable sources by 2020. COEJL and JCPA also support policies that encourage energy conservation in our homes, communities, and government institutions. Such policies include incentives to develop efficient technologies, tax credits to encourage the purchase of such technologies, energy standards for new buildings and appliances, and provisions for public transit.

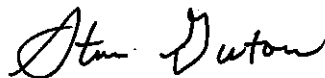
Domestically, federal policy should provide financial assistance to vulnerable populations (for increased heating and cooling costs, weatherization, and the purchase of energy-efficient appliances) and support employment training and opportunities in an emerging “green” economy.

Internationally, the United States should provide funds to help vulnerable populations adapt to climate change. The United States should also look to transfer appropriate technology (e.g., drought-resistant crops, renewable energy technologies) and resources to mitigate and avoid the effects of climate change abroad.

Sincerely,



Sybil Sanchez
Director, COEJL



Rabbi Steve Gutow
CEO and President JCPA; Co-Chair COEJL

Attachments:

- 1) Washington Jewish Week, February 13, 2013, "Getting Jews on the Climate Bus"
by Rabbi Steve Gutow and Sybil Sanchez
- 2) COEJL's Working Principles on Current Energy Challenges 2012
- 3) Jewish Community Priorities for Climate and Energy Policy 2008
- 4) Global Warming: A Jewish Response 2000