



The Honorable Sheldon Whitehouse  
The Honorable Henry Waxman  
Co-chairs,  
Bicameral Task Force on Climate Change  
Capitol Hill  
Washington, DC

February 20, 2013

Dear Senator Whitehouse and Congressman Waxman:

On behalf of the Board and staff of the Evangelical Environmental Network (EEN) I write to thank you for your service to our country, in particular for your leadership on climate change, including your co-chairmanship of the Bicameral Task Force on Climate Change. In your capacity as Co-chairs, you have asked us to provide “ideas for actions the federal government can take to address climate change.” This letter is our response to your request.

**A. The Great Moral Cause of Our Time**

We consider overcoming climate change by keeping the temperature rise to 2°C above preindustrial levels to be the great moral cause of our time and the next great cause of freedom. EEN has been seriously engaged on this issue for over a decade, and it remains our top policy priority. We believe overcoming climate change is part of what it means to be a Christian today; it is part of loving God and our neighbors as ourselves, of respecting the sanctity of life given by God, including the unborn and those yet to be born.

**B. Sowing the Seeds of Bipartisanship**

We note at the outset that one of the most important things the federal government can do is to act in a manner that enjoys or will eventually enjoy broad bi-partisan support to ensure that whatever actions are taken will carry forward into the future, regardless of which party holds power in the legislative and executive branches. No one knows better than we do how difficult this particular issue can be for the more conservative members of our society, including many Republicans. We know that bipartisanship on climate action is not easy. But it is necessary.



The simple truth is, those opposed to climate action have done a good job of having climate change viewed as a political issue, even a partisan one. We firmly believe that the need to act to overcome climate change is a moral issue, that it should be viewed morally rather than in a partisan fashion. Science helps us understand that there is a problem and the magnitude and urgency of the problem. The systemic nature, the magnitude, and the urgency of the problem require not only that individuals act in keeping with their values, but that government at all levels must act – especially the federal government. But the decision to act, both individually and through our various levels of government, is a moral one. This is a moral cause whose solutions require government policies in keeping with freedom.

As such, we implore you as statesmen to help move our country forward in a manner that sow's the seeds of bi-partisanship to be reaped in the future. Let's work together to stay out of the partisan trap set by opponents of climate action.

### **C. We Must Act Starting Now**

Precisely because climate change is the great moral cause of our time and the need for action is urgent, we cannot wait to act until there is complete unanimity. Even in the absence of strong bi-partisan support today, actions must be taken now to keep us within striking distance of avoiding 2°C and help us adapt to the impacts that will occur. But such actions must always be taken with an eye towards eventual bi-partisan support, or that would lead to eventual bi-partisan solutions.

### **D. Action to Address the Causes: Mitigation**

#### **1. Preference for Market-based Mechanisms**

As conservatives, we believe in using the least amount of government power necessary to achieve the common good. Since the issuing of the Evangelical Climate Initiative statement in 2006, EEN has endorsed the use of market-based mechanisms to put a price on carbon, thereby allowing the dynamics of the marketplace to find the most efficient and least-costly ways of overcoming climate change. As such, we favor cap-and-trade or a carbon tax as preferred choices over regulation when it comes to addressing the causes, or climate mitigation.

But we are past time for serious action on climate mitigation, and thus our country must move forward even if Congress is currently unable to price carbon via a market-based mechanism.

#### **2. EPA Regulations, a Second Best Option**

Therefore, we strongly urge the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), under its authority contained in the Clean Air Act (CAA), to issue a rule on existing sources that would be finalized in 2014. We further urge the EPA to require strong emissions reductions that keep our country's contribution in striking distance of 2°C, thereby enhancing freedom in the future by reducing impacts. But, also in keeping with freedom, we urge that states be given maximum flexibility as to how emissions can be reduced.

Strength of resolve, flexibility in implementation, infused with freedom – these should be the watchwords for the EPA's regulation of existing sources. Remaining steadfast on the

strength of emissions reductions may help pave the way for Congress to pass a freedom-enhancing market-based approach – freedom-through-strength, if you will.

We ask that Congress take the Hippocratic Oath – do no harm – when it comes to any EPA regulations of greenhouse gases in keeping with the principles we have outlined. This includes trying to pressure the EPA into issuing weak regulations, creating unnecessary procedural hurdles or delaying tactics, or even attempting the extreme measure of killing such regulations via the Congressional Review Act. In addition, Congress should fully fund EPA regulations of greenhouse gases – no attempting to thwart implementation by not appropriating the funds to do so.

### 3. Eliminate Fossil Subsidies

As conservatives we believe the free market is a tremendous engine for helping to allocate scarce resources efficiently, a hallmark of good stewardship of our financial resources. We strive to create situations wherein economic actors compete on a level playing field.

Government subsidies create distortions that can produce economic inefficiencies, and can unfairly favor one economic actor over another. For over 100 years the fossil industry has benefited from government subsidies. To have a true level playing field between polluting energy and clean energy would require providing to the clean energy industry the compounded value of this century-long investment our country has made in the fossil industry.

While the astronomical value required to create such a level playing field in the energy sector is politically impractical, for now we'll settle for the elimination of all fossil industry subsidies starting today, with the funds used for clean energy R&D, especially programs like ARPA-E.

### 4. Improve Energy Efficiency in Buildings – Lead through LEED

Improving one's energy efficiency is a requirement of good stewardship. It is vital that the federal government lead by example, in this instance, lead through LEED (or Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design).

As such, we propose the following:

- a) all future federally-owned buildings meet LEED standards, and that current buildings meet or exceed LEED standards for retrofitted buildings;
- b) while we seek to avoid unfunded mandates, policies should encourage those in charge of public buildings receiving federal funds to meet or exceed LEED standards for new or retrofitted buildings;
- c) existing commercial and residential properties that choose to undergo renovation and achieve a 20% energy reduction could receive tax credits up to 30% of the retrofitted cost, and;
- d) all federally supported mortgage providers like Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac should provide discounts or other incentives for LEED certified homes.

5. From Energy Poverty to Energy Prosperity

Helping the poor in poor countries to climb out of poverty and into prosperity is in keeping with the beliefs and values espoused in our Declaration of Independence, that everyone is endowed with the inalienable right to pursue life, liberty, and happiness. Creating economic growth and stability in such situations is also in our national interest, given that it is beneficial to both our economic well-being as well as our national security, fostering good will in the hearts of future customers and allies.

Clean, affordable, and reliable energy is an essential ingredient in creating sustainable economic progress. Not only should the U.S. lead the clean energy revolution, we should help to ensure that the economic freedom and prosperity created by this revolution bring light to the darkest corners of the globe, where 1.3 billion people still lack access to electricity and another 1 billion do not have reliable electricity.

As such, federal agencies dealing with foreign assistance should be at the forefront of efforts to move people from energy poverty to energy prosperity, working with local communities to create self-sustaining market-based approaches. Congress should reward such successful programs with increased funding.

**E. Action to Address the Consequences: Adaptation**

Climate change impacts have already begun, and, even with our best mitigation efforts, we will still see strong consequences throughout our lives. Taking inspiration from the biblical Patriarch Joseph, who rallied one of the most advanced civilizations of his time to prepare for hard times to come (Gen. 41), we must find ways to adapt and plan for to this new climate reality.

1. Domestic Adaptation

a) Just Say No to Maladaptation

Once again, the Hippocratic Oath is a good first step in climate adaptation: do no harm. Don't subsidize or support maladaptation. Be guided by the principles undergirding the bi-partisan Coastal Barrier Resources Act ([CBRA](#)) signed and [championed](#) by President Reagan in 1982.

b) Say Yes to Planning for Hard Times to Come

Like the Patriarch Joseph, the federal government should actively fund and encourage planning for a future made different by climate change, such as higher and stronger storm surges, the intensification of floods and droughts, and more heat waves.

President Reagan's leadership on CBRA demonstrates that strong bipartisanship in this area is possible. Indeed, many conservatives now recognize that the climate is changing and therefore creating such resiliency to climate impacts is an area ripe for bipartisanship today. Such cooperation could pave the way for bipartisan efforts on climate mitigation, thereby creating political resiliency for the full range of climate solutions.

## 2. International Adaptation

Our forbearers came here to create a better future for themselves and their children. We are a freedom-loving people because we know that to create a better future you must have the freedom to do so.

Because we Americans have believed throughout our history that the future can be better, we also have a strong belief in fairness. For individuals to be able to create a better future, things need to be fair. Everybody needs a fair shake.

For the poor in developing countries today, the tyranny of global warming is the equivalent of what sparked our American Revolution, taxation without representation. Through a process in which they have no say, by decisions made by those far, far away, are profound limitations placed upon their freedom to create a better life for themselves and their loved ones. It isn't fair.

For freedom-loving, fair-minded people like us, climate change is a worldwide scourge, similar to how fascism and communism were in the twentieth century. Climate change is a freedom denier, a freedom destroyer, not only in terms of denying opportunities for individuals, but potentially for the cause of freedom in entire countries.


Helping the poor in poor countries adapt to the consequences of climate change is in keeping with our national character shown forth in our values of freedom, fairness, and the future. It is also in our national interest to promote stability through adaptation, thereby helping to avoid the threat multiplier effect of destabilizing climate impacts and keeping our young men and women of the armed forces out of harm's way.

For these reasons, Congress should continue to increase funding for international adaptation consistent with the commitments our country made at the international climate negotiations, starting with then-Secretary of State Clinton's 2009 pledge at Copenhagen that developed countries would provide poor countries with \$100 billion a year to address climate change.

The American Revolution, slavery, the Civil War, the Great Depression, two World Wars, civil rights – our country has faced great challenges in the past to become the greatest power on the earth and a beacon of freedom to the world. We can meet this great challenge of overcoming climate change and come out stronger and better on the other side.

Thank you again for your leadership, and we would be happy to address any questions you may have.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "M. C. Hescoc". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above the typed name of the sender.

The Rev. Mitchell C. Hescoc,  
President/CEO