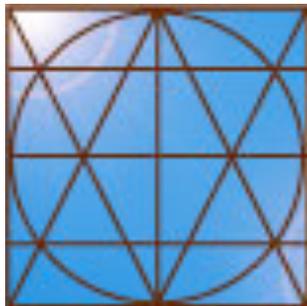




The earth is the Lord's (Psalms: 24:1)

The Lord hears the cry of the poor (Job: 34:28)

Climate Fairness Agenda: A Religious Call to Address Global Climate Change & Poverty



THE NATIONAL
RELIGIOUS
PARTNERSHIP
FOR THE
ENVIRONMENT

US Conference of Catholic Bishops
National Council of Churches
Coalition on the Environment and Jewish Life
Evangelical Environmental Network



The Lord hears the cry of the poor (Job: 34:28)

Overview

As a nation we face great challenges. Yet, we believe that a renewed commitment to the common good, to greater fairness and justice, and to a sense of mutual solidarity, will provide the hope and inspiration to create lasting and genuine solutions.

In recent years, many faith communities representing the breadth and depth of religious life in America have come together to call for an urgent, proactive response to the growing threat of global climate change. Our response is guided by scriptural commands to care for God's creation and to "love our neighbors" as we promote the common good of the entire human family. But we are particularly driven by our moral obligation to stand up for the voiceless and vulnerable in this debate -- those who have contributed the least to the problem yet stand to suffer the most. Indeed, experts tell us people living in poverty and on the margins of society will not only suffer the worst consequences of climate change, but will also bear the greatest economic burden from any large-scale program to reduce global warming pollution if climate policy is not structured correctly. We are also keenly aware that inaction on our part regarding global climate change is the most costly of all courses of action for those living in poverty.

We call on the Administration and the Congress to find common ground on global climate change and take steps together to address this important moral challenge. We believe that any response will be substantively incomplete as a matter of policy and morally unacceptable as an expression of our values if it does not make protecting those least able to protect themselves a central priority. This means taking meaningful and measurable steps to shield vulnerable populations from the disproportionate dangers they face as the planet warms, to spread the economic costs of changing our energy habits fairly and sustainably, and to limit the financial burdens that will be placed on low-income and working families by new regulations on global warming pollution.

Fortunately, these ethical principles and the related priorities and policy goals -- which flow directly from our faith and unite our diverse religious communities-- are as attainable as they are essential. Many policy approaches will produce substantial resources and provide unique opportunities to protect the disadvantaged from suffering the worst consequences of climate change and climate change policy and improve their quality of life. There are tremendous opportunities for the free market system to create and promote new technologies, new industries, new jobs, and new sources of income, as well as new ways to help the voiceless and vulnerable protect themselves from the dangers of climate change.

To draw attention to these opportunities, as well as to the larger moral dimensions of this critical debate, we offer this Climate Fairness Agenda. This Agenda articulates a framework for achieving environmental and economic fairness in climate change policy both domestically and internationally.



Priority: Make protecting people in poverty a central focus of any climate legislation.

Resources: Provide the necessary resources to shield vulnerable populations at home and abroad from the impacts of climate change and limit the economic burdens of new policies on low-income and working families, while simultaneously enhancing their quality of life.

Energy Relief: Provide an effective program of transitional relief and rebates for low-income and working families and individuals in the U.S. to offset any impacts resulting from a substantial rise in energy prices due to climate change policies.

International Investment Provide essential help to address the disproportionate impact of climate change upon the most vulnerable people and nations around the world by supporting effective adaptation measures and by investing in mitigation strategies that can help the world's most vulnerable nations grow in a sustainable and climate-friendly manner. Funding for these new resources must be in addition to other overseas relief and development commitments.

Evaluation: Study the particular impacts and consequences of climate change on vulnerable populations around the world and the effectiveness of specific relief efforts.

Preparation: Promote emergency and long-range planning and assistance to help vulnerable populations in the U.S. and abroad adapt to adverse climate impacts and climate change policy and to participate in designing and implementing adaptation and mitigation efforts.

DOMESTIC AGENDA

U.S. climate change policies should achieve the following goals:

Goal #1: Make the protection of low-income and working families¹ and individuals in the U.S. a central priority.

Goal #2: Ensure that low-income and working families and individuals are protected (held harmless) from energy-related price increases and other associated costs and economic burdens resulting from policies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Goal #3: Create new well-paying, climate-friendly jobs and assist workers who lose their jobs as a result of new climate regulations and other policies.

Goal #4: Support low-income and working families and individuals in adapting to and recovering from the impacts of climate change.

¹ According to the Urban Institute, the working family makes on average an income at or below twice the official poverty threshold, or about \$38,000 for a family of four.



Goal #5: Support opportunities for low-income and working families to participate in energy programs that both reduce their energy costs and are consistent with energy conservation goals.

INTERNATIONAL AGENDA

U.S. climate change policies should achieve the following goals:

Goal #1: Assist the most vulnerable developing countries who have contributed the least to climate change in increasing their resilience, adapting to climate change impacts, and developing sustainable low-carbon economies. Funding for adaptation and mitigation must be in addition to other overseas relief and development commitments. Adaptation funding should address impacts such as water scarcity, reductions in agricultural productivity, floods, sea level rise, climate related disasters, shifts in biodiversity, and other consequences that arise from these impacts such as increases in refugees and internally displaced persons.

Goal #2: Promote local community participation in adaptation and mitigation programs administered by non-governmental relief and development organizations. At least 40% of all US funding for international adaptation and mitigation efforts should be administered by USAID for such public-private partnerships.

Goal #3: Ensure that policies to reduce emissions from deforestation and forest degradation (REDD) enhance the lives of the poor by providing them with additional sources of revenue and a healthier and more sustainable environment. Policies must also protect the lives of the poor and vulnerable by respecting the land tenure and resource rights of local communities dependent upon forest resources, consulting local communities regarding related projects, and making certain that they share equitably in the revenue generated from such activities.

Goal #4: Provide research funds to respond to unforeseen impacts of climate change and climate change policy on vulnerable populations—particularly in most vulnerable developing countries. Best practices should be promoted as countries discover and implement concrete ways to adapt to climate change and reduce emissions.

Goal #5: Ensure that appropriate technology for both adaptation and mitigation is provided expeditiously to the most vulnerable developing countries.