



Department of Justice, Peace, and Human Development

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MEMORANDUM

TO: National Religious Partnership for the Environment

FROM: John Carr, Executive Director, Justice, Peace and Human Development
Cecilia Calvo, Project Coordinator, Environmental Justice Program

SUBJECT: Global Climate Change

DATE: December 11, 2008

This memo outlines past USCCB legislative advocacy on Global Climate Change and future strategies for public policy.

Following the leadership of Pope Benedict XVI and in light of the statement of the US Bishops, *Global Climate Change: A Plea for Dialogue, Prudence, and the Common Good*, the Conference is seriously addressing the issue of global climate change. The bishops' primary focus in the current public debate is protecting the poor who contribute the least to climate change from suffering the worst impacts of climate change and efforts to address it. To advance this priority, the USCCB along with the Catholic Coalition on Climate Change (CCCC) and our interfaith and ecumenical partners have worked closely with members of the Senate and will continue to engage the new Administration and key members of Congress, so that our primary concern for the poor is reflected in future climate policies and legislation.

Climate Change Policy

In the last Congress, the USCCB and our coalition partners focused on shaping policies and establishing precedents on climate change and the poor. Despite these efforts the Lieberman-Warner Climate Security Act of 2008, S. 3036, was not adopted by the Senate. However, the vote (48-36—plus six absent members who would have voted affirmatively on the bill) represents the strongest indication yet that Congress may be ready to address climate change legislation that lowers greenhouse gas emissions and begins to create incentives for alternative energy. Most importantly for the U.S. Catholic bishops and the wider religious community, this legislation included strong measures to protect the poor and vulnerable at home and abroad from both climate change and the impacts of climate change legislation.

These efforts helped lay a foundation for future climate change legislation. Throughout this past year, the U.S. Catholic bishops and other faith leaders worked closely with Senate leaders to ensure that:

- a significant portion of the public proceeds generated by the cap and trade approach would be made available to poor people in the most vulnerable developing countries to help them adapt to a changing climate;
- sufficient assistance would be available for the poorest individuals and families in the U.S. to help offset anticipated rising energy costs; and
- workers and their communities dependent on industries directly impacted by the legislation would be given significant transition assistance and other help



Policy Landscape:

Last year, the climate change activity was primarily confined to the Senate. With a new Congress, a new administration, and a bleak economic outlook, it is unclear that climate change legislation will be a top priority. There are indications that the new administration will take a leadership role in addressing climate change. However, the state of the economy will present new challenges for the development of future climate legislation and greater difficulties in allocating resources to poor families, communities and countries. Designed correctly, however, proposed policies to address climate change will create new and necessary resources to protect the poor and vulnerable from the impacts of climate change and climate policy. It is more likely that some aspects of climate change and energy policy will be folded into an economic stimulus plan this year. The USCCB and its partners will insist that such a plan not only contains investments in clean energy technology but also spurs job growth, provides transition assistance to workers in older industries, and is targeted to those most in need.

Future Strategies:

The USCCB, the Catholic Coalition on Climate Change (CCCC) and other members of the National Religious Partnership for the Environment (NRPE) will continue to work with key members of Congress and allies to ensure that our message which links care for creation and a priority for the poor is front and center in the public policy debates. Strategies include:

- Partnering with NRPE and other allies to engage the new Administration and key members of Congress to ensure that climate legislation targets necessary and adequate resources to help poor and vulnerable people in the U.S. and around the world adapt to and mitigate the impacts of climate change and climate change policy.
- Working with NRPE members to develop a targeted list of House members and Senators and nurture new champions for our poverty agenda.
- Increasing the size and strengthening the impact of our legislative network through our major new initiative, the Catholic Climate Covenant (separate attachment) resulting in more Catholic individuals and organizations involved in advocacy on USCCB priorities.
- Facilitating the increasing engagement of Catholic Relief Services and Catholic Charities USA on climate change issues related to the poor at home and abroad. They are increasingly moving forward with their own efforts on how to address and integrate climate change into their on-going programming and policy. Their active participation, experience and expertise will be critical to implementing the bishops' public policy priorities on climate change.

For further information and resources on climate change contact Cecilia Calvo at the USCCB at ccalvo@usccb.org or go to www.usccb.org/sdwp/ejp/climate.



The Catholic Coalition on Climate Change

Putting our Catholic faith into action on climate change!

Coalition Members

United States Conference of Catholic Bishops:

Department of Justice Peace and Human Development

Migration and Refugee Services

The Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities

Carnelite NGO

Catholic Charities USA

The Catholic Health Association of the United States

Catholic Relief Services

The Conference of Major Superiors of Men

The Franciscan Action Network

The Leadership Conference of Women Religious

The National Catholic Rural Life Conference

The National Council of Catholic Women

A Catholic Climate Covenant: *The St. Francis Pledge to Protect Creation and the Poor*

The **CATHOLIC COALITION ON CLIMATE CHANGE** is launching a unique and unprecedented initiative to demonstrate a common Catholic commitment to care for God's creation and to stand with the poor and vulnerable people in our nation and around the world facing the impacts of a changing climate.

"Today the great gift of God's Creation is exposed to serious dangers and lifestyles which can degrade it. Environmental pollution is making particularly unsustainable the lives of the poor of the world ... we must pledge ourselves to take care of creation and to share its resources in solidarity."

Pope Benedict XVI

The U.S. Bishops and Pope Benedict XVI, in response to intergovernmental warnings that human activity is resulting in climate change which is seriously impacting those least able to respond, have called us to examine our lifestyle and demonstrate in concrete ways our concern for God's creation and the poor, so that the poor do not unduly suffer.

The **CATHOLIC CLIMATE COVENANT ~ St. Francis Partnership to Protect Creation and the Poor** is a new initiative developed by the Coalition designed to support Catholics in our care and concern by:

Encouraging and assisting Catholic institutions, organizations, parishes and individuals to take **The St. Francis Pledge**, thereby acting to protect our planet and those in poverty who are most impacted by climate change.

Sharing the good news about ways in which the Catholic community is carrying out the **CATHOLIC CLIMATE COVENANT** to honor our obligations toward God's gift of creation.

This effort will be launched during the Easter season in 2009 with a public event on Earth Day, April 22, 2009.





The St. Francis Pledge to Protect Creation and the Poor

The St. Francis Pledge is a solemn commitment made by Catholic individuals, groups and institutions to honor God’s creation and serve the poor by doing the following:

PRAY and reflect on the duty to care for God’s creation and protect the poor and vulnerable;

LEARN about and educate others on the causes and moral dimensions of climate change;

ASSESS how each of us —as individuals and as organizations—is contributing to climate change (i.e. consumption and conservation);

ACT to change our choices and behaviors contributing to climate change and;

ADVOCATE for Catholic principles and priorities in climate change discussions and decisions, especially as they impact the poor and vulnerable.



**Many of you may already be doing some of these activities.
We’ll offer more ideas, resources, and tools .**

The Covenant website will feature the many ways Catholic individuals, families, schools, parishes and other institutions are fulfilling The St. Francis Pledge.

We will share **news and resources** that we believe will help you fulfill the Pledge and go beyond. Quotes for bulletin inserts, ways to advocate on behalf of poor people at home and abroad, clipart and images, curricula for schools and adult religious education programs are some examples of what you will find here.

You will be directed to information on **Catholic social teaching** on being stewards of God’s creation.

Finally, we are producing a **short video** for the Covenant website that will be an overall introduction to, and inspiration for, our engagement in this important behavior.

What can you do, now?

- Visit www.catholicsandclimatechange.org and signup to receive updates this project unfolds.
- Begin discussing and promoting this initiative with colleagues, friends ,and parishioners and be ready to **Join the Covenant** by taking the Pledge when all of the materials are available in Spring, 2009.



*We look forward to working with you on this important Catholic initiative.
The time is right for the Catholic community in the United States to come together
to demonstrate stewardship, solidarity, and concern for the poor.
We honor our Creator by caring for creation.
Won't you join us?*