

Guide for In District Visits with Members of Congress –Memorial Day Recess 2009 *Franciscan Campaign on Climate Change*

Before Meeting with your Congressional Representative, try to understand his/her stance on the issues of climate change, his/her voting record, and the issues important to him/her.

Present yourselves as constituents of the Member of Congress and members of *Franciscan Action Network*.

Do a round of introductions. Make sure that each person expresses the work or ministry that they do. If representing a parish or a school, indicate the size of the parish or the student population.

Designate two or three chief spokespersons. One person can indicate the reality of climate change. Another can tell how it impacts the local area and why you are concerned about it. Another person can express what you would like to see in climate change legislation.

For example:

On the reality of climate change

- We believe that human activity is playing a part in causing a change in the climate
- We are already experiencing the effects in destructive storms and significant warming in arctic regions
- These results have a devastating impact on the planet and can produce disastrous effects in island populations and coastal regions
- Drought and the extinction of certain animals also can result

On why this issue is important to us

- We believe that we should enjoy the beauty and diversity of the earth and care for the earth responsibly
- St. Francis of Assisi had a strong appreciation of God's creation and believed it was revelatory of who God is
- We have concern for persons who are poor, who will suffer the most from the impact of climate change—*if you have personal stories, whether in the U.S. or outside, please include them...*
- Why else for you—make it personal
- As a member of Franciscan Action Network, I believe that, as a nation, we must do all that we can to protect the environment for the well-being of the planet

On what you want in Climate Change and Energy Legislation –**Here is the ask**

H.R. 2454 *The American Clean Energy and Security Act* has just passed out of the House Energy and Commerce Committee and is heading to the entire House for a vote.

Although it is a complicated bill, overall, we think you **should support it** when it comes to a vote. We think the bill has merit because:

- It includes clear, mandatory emission reduction targets
- It offers support for low- and moderate-income households in the U.S. through mechanisms that will allow them the flexibility to adjust to the increased costs
- The support for persons who are poor outside of the U.S. is being distributed in a positive and useful way

However—the bill needs to be **improved** if it is to achieve a greater moral good. At present, the bill is not as good as it should be.

- Increase the resources committed to international adaptation from 1% to 3.5% (to approximately \$3.5 billion) in the first year and ramp up funding levels at a faster pace for future years. Franciscan communities serve persons who are poor throughout the world. The erratic nature of weather patterns and food production is already having a negative effect. We must provide adequate support to persons in need as our planet transitions through this time of instability.

Here is the reasoning behind this improvement

As green house gas concentrations rise and the average long-term temperature increases, the atmosphere is being put out of balance. This imbalance leads to erratic weather and food production as well as changing water supplies. All of these results more acutely impact persons who are poor outside of the U.S., where there is a less of a safety net. The UN estimates that \$28 billion is needed to support people in need. As members of the U.S., we must do our part. *If you have stories or examples of international impact from climate change, share those, and/or the fact that Franciscans serve persons who are poor worldwide and we see this impact firsthand. Persons who are poor, who are most vulnerable to the harms of climate change, have done the least to contribute to it.*

- Improve the cap and trade system to achieve a more rapid rate of green house gas emission reduction by 2020. There is well-founded concern that the proposed level of decrease currently in the legislation may not be large enough to avert the most catastrophic effects of climate change. At a minimum, we believe that emissions must be reduced by 20% of 2005 levels by the year 2020.

Here is the reasoning behind this improvement

Why the greater level of emission reduction (from 17% to 20%) by 2020?

The goal of emission reductions, gained through cap and trade and other means, is to keep the level of atmospheric green house gases below the point where the average global temperatures will rise above 2-3 degrees Celsius. If the average global temperatures rise an additional 2-3 degrees, it is feared that the speed of the subsequent temperature rises will increase as a result. The impacts from these temperature rises will be very detrimental to the natural world and we humans, especially persons who are poor. Since naturally occurring green house emissions take place and the earth experiences emission spikes from volcanic and other such natural occurrences, humans need to do their part to ensure that the atmosphere does not exceed the threshold because of our inaction. *(Note—you do not have to be a scientist, the simple answer is that climate scientists suggest that we need to keep green house gas concentrations from rising to a level that can lead to a greater than 2-3 degree Celsius increase in atmospheric average temperature. We are getting too close already and must begin the decrease in human additions to green house emissions).*

Invite the Member of Congress to share her/his views with you. Look for points of agreement. Get to a point of “the ask.”

Members may not be willing to definitively say whether or not they will support HR 2454 because it has just come out of committee; however, work to get a sense of when they would be willing to do so.

If they seem supportive of the bill, then ask them if they would be willing to offer an amendment or work with others on an amendment for the two improvements we want.

Thank the Member of Congress for her/his time and commit your self to staying in touch.

Questions that might arise:

The cost of cap and trade is too expensive for our economy in recovery.

- There is a cost; however, we do not see the start of the cap and trade system until 2012, so our economy has some time to recover.
- The legislation includes a number of allowances to high energy usage industries and other high green house gas emitters to help them have time to transition.
- The legislation allows for new jobs and opportunities to be created
- The long-term cost of inaction will be even greater.

The cost of the legislation will be high for families (some might cite a figure of \$3100 per household per year).

- If they quote you the \$3100 figure, know that the person whose study is “used” to arrive at this number has strongly discounted it and says that it is way too high and inaccurate. (We can send them that story if needed)
- Yes, there is a cost to families; this is no small thing especially for those on limited financial means. The Congressional Budget Office (CBO) recently estimated the yearly additional cost between \$600 for low-income families to \$2200 for higher-income households. In addition, the allowances for utilities and the direct payments to low- and moderate-income household will help reduce the negative impact.

The problem of climate change is not that great or may not be real.

- We do not want to get into an argument with the science. Our stance is one that since the great preponderance of climate scientists agrees that there is a discernable human-caused component to climate change, the virtues of prudence and solidarity suggest that we find action. We feel this morally because the negative impacts on numerous species, including humans, will be great if we do nothing.

This legislation will make our industries uncompetitive in world markets. Another objection is that if China, India, Brazil... do not reduce their emissions, our impact will be negligible.

- On competitiveness, the legislation includes allowances to help higher green house gas emitters adjust over time.
- On the international scene, it is important to note that China in particular is investing a large amount of resources into greening their economy. They, as well as other developing nations, know that climate change will have a negative impact on their people. Many developing nations are doing what they can. Some could and should do more. The U.S. has to do its share and serve as a leader in this development.
- Finally, when the Administration furthers the negotiations in Copenhagen this December, they need a strong U.S. climate bill so that they can hold a better hand to encourage other nations to take strong stands too. If the U.S. does not show first strong leadership, then the other nations will not either.