

Vote Yes on I-732 and Lead Our Nation on Climate Change Action

I strongly endorse I-732. Washington has a singular opportunity, with approval of I-732, to address the threat of climate change and alter the ineffectual course of national climate policies.

As if that isn't enough, Washington voters also would be sending a broader message to our nation's capital: the public demands an alternative to putrid politics-as-usual and is taking action. Such strong assertions, I realize, require a persuasive explanation.

First I note that I know something about climate change, and the difficulty of achieving positive change in political systems dominated by special interests. I was the Director of NASA Goddard Institute for Space Studies for more than three decades and testified to Congress many times about the threat of climate change. I have spoken with government officials about actions needed to address climate change in more than a dozen countries and a dozen states in the U.S.

Little has been done to preserve a viable climate system. Global fossil fuel emissions and global warming are increasing. Climate extremes are becoming more intense: heat waves, droughts and fires, on one hand, and more extreme rainfall, floods and storms, on the other. However, the greatest threat is to young people who may inherit a climate system running out of their control, with deleterious effects including large sea level rise and loss of coastal cities.

This is tragic, because these dangers can be avoided. If we make the price of fossil fuels honest, by including their costs to society, we can move rapidly to clean energies. Costs of air pollution, water pollution, and climate change tip the balance to clean energy, even ignoring the great cost, in treasure and lives, of protecting the global supply lines of fossil fuels.

The most efficient way to phase off fossil fuels is a steadily-rising carbon fee collected from fossil fuel companies and distributed uniformly to the public. The public will support this "carbon fee-and-dividend." Wealthy people will pay more in increased prices than they receive in the dividend, because they have bigger houses, fly around the world more, etc. However, economic studies show that carbon fee-and-dividend spurs the economy, increases GNP, creates millions of jobs, and rapidly reduces fossil fuel use. Most people will come out ahead.

So why did nations from Australia to Europe and states such as California adopt an ineffectual bureaucratic cap-and-trade system? In a word: bribes. Seven years ago, then Senator John Kerry admitted to me that fee-and-dividend was better, but, he said, in words that still ring in my ears, "I can't get one vote for that." Instead, liberals pushed for Waxman/Markey cap-and-trade, with every vote bought and paid for by giveaways to special interests, the bill stretching to over 2000 pages.

Conservatives, and I in [congressional testimony](#), brand cap-and-trade as cap-and-tax, because it raises the price of energy for the public with the money used to grow government. Australians dumped the government that adopted cap-and-trade and rescinded the bill. California's bureaucratic program, after 10 years, has had vanishing effect on emissions – worse than the average of the other 49 states.

I-732 lacks the clear transparency and reproducibility of pure fee-and-dividend, but it is good and has not been compromised by special interests. Instead of giving the funds collected from fossil fuel companies to the public, it reduces the sales tax 15 percent and funds a Working Families Tax Credit for low-income families. Energy prices will rise, but the measure will induce investments in clean energy, giving Washington a head-start in technology competition.

I-732 is the product of a lean [group](#) of committed people who gathered 350,000 signatures, even in the absence of support from certain "Big Green" environmental groups that remain eager to work with special interests that benefit from cap-and-trade schemes and tax-and-spend.

For the sake of government transparency, to provide an example for other states and the rest of the world, but most of all for young people, future generations, and nature, please vote "yes" on I-732.