

TESTIMONY BEFORE THE OREGON SENATE ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES  
COMMITTEE HEARING MARCH 1, 2017

I am convinced that we need to put a price on greenhouse gas emissions.

It should be obvious by now that emitting greenhouse gases into the atmosphere – CO2 and methane -- is unacceptably destructive to our planet's air and oceans. There has never been a worldwide scientific AND political consensus broader than the current consensus that CO2 and other GHG emissions are causing unacceptable negative changes to the ecosystem.

That greenhouse gasses are leading to catastrophic climate and ocean changes is the consensus of the United Nations' IPCC scientists. It is the considered opinion of the US Defense Department, it is the judgement of virtually all nations of the world as they convened in December 2015 in Paris.

I believe in the free market – except where the free market has proved not to work successfully. There are areas where the free market does not work successfully – providing for military security, for instance, providing health care (apparently), and certainly in setting a price for GHG emitting goods and services that reflects their TRUE costs to our society.

There is no pure free market solution to climate change. The free market does not, has not and cannot price fossil fuels at their true cost of utilization. The market has no way to include the full, global environmental costs of that production – the human health effects, the immediate degrading effects on land water, and particularly the global climate change effects that will persist for centuries. These environmental costs are and will be borne by all of us and our children and our grandchildren and our great grandchildren while the benefits of fossil fuel production accrue disproportionately to the very few in the here and now.

The price we pay for fossil fuel derived goods and services is only a partial accounting of the true cost of those goods and services. A large part of the true cost of fossil fuel transactions is born by people – people now and in the future - who do not benefit from those transactions but only suffer for them - in the form of poor health, degraded environment and negative global climate changes.

This necessity to rein in GHG has been recognized even by staunch Conservatives such as Henry Paulson, George Schultz and James Baker in their recent Climate Leadership Council Proposal. See “The Conservative Case for Carbon Dividends” <https://www.clcouncil.org/>.

Ideally leadership on climate change would come from Washington DC. But that self-evidently will not happen anytime soon.

The Oregon Legislature must step in where the free market and our national political system has failed us and drive the market price of GHG activities up to their ACTUAL cost.

I am not sure of the best strategy -- carbon tax, cap and trade, carbon cap, etc. These all need to be examined by the Committee, NOW. The first step is to acknowledge that legislative action is

TESTIMONY BEFORE THE OREGON SENATE ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES  
COMMITTEE HEARING MARCH 1, 2017

absolutely required if we are to edge our way back from the abyss of uncontrolled climate change. And then the Committee and then the Legislature must ACT.

So the logic is simple:

1. Climate change driven by greenhouse gas emissions is compromising our air and ocean systems. Very bad things are going to happen.
2. The free market is not going to address the problem.
3. Volunteerism is not going to address the problem
4. There are abundant and economically reasonable alternatives to fossil carbon based energy generation and transportation.
5. There will be no leadership from Washington DC
6. Time is short.

The Oregon Legislature must take up this issue and institute COST OF CARBON measures so that the people and the State Oregon can discharge to this and future Oregonians their responsibilities to preserve and enhance a livable environment.

Paul Seamons  
27354 Archibald Lane  
Deer Island, OR 97054  
503 397 1007