



Coalition on the Environment and Jewish Life
Protecting Creation, Generation to Generation

March 26, 2010

Dear Senator,

The Coalition on the Environment and Jewish Life (COEJL) represents 29 participating organizations, including the major movements of American Judaism. We have been working to address climate change and seek climate justice since 1993. Throughout our efforts we have worked collaboratively with other faith-based groups to advocate that any U.S. or global response to climate change protects both God's Creation and all of God's children. To that end, we write today to urge you to support passage of fair and effective climate legislation this year.

The most important step that we can take as a community and a nation is to develop a structure and framework that addresses the global climate crisis. As the world's largest historical emitter, it is our moral responsibility to reduce our emissions and assist those who are already suffering from the impacts of climate change. This must be a top priority for the U.S. in the coming months.

Ecclesiastes 1:4 tells us that, "One generation goes, another comes, but the earth remains the same forever." Yet our generation is learning that this promise may not be ensured. Our earth is changing and the abundant food, stable climate, and clean, breathable air that we enjoy today may not be here forever if we do not act now.

Scientists, economists and religious leaders agree on the need for comprehensive climate and energy legislation built around a strong cap on carbon emissions and stringent short and long term emissions reductions goals. Any policy response must reflect the targets outlined by the international scientific community to prevent the worst impacts of climate change by ensuring that global warming is not more than 2 degrees Celsius. Currently, the scientific community is recommending that we reduce our emissions by at least 25 percent below 1990 levels by 2020 and by 80 percent below 1990 levels by 2050. This is the only way to limit both the current global temperature rise and future environmental degradation. Comprehensive climate legislation should create the bedrock for America's transition from polluting fossil fuels to clean, renewable energy sources. It is not enough to tell citizens and corporations to pollute less; we need viable clean energy alternatives and meaningful measures to minimize the impact of climate change driven by a national legislative framework.

COEJL advocates the development of comprehensive national energy and climate change policy that increases U.S. energy security by reducing dependence upon fossil fuels – particularly oil

from the Middle East – through energy efficiency and the development of environmentally clean affordable alternative, renewable energy sources and technologies.

In addition, any response to global climate change must protect those living in poverty both in the U.S. and abroad. To do so, we must ensure that low income consumers are not pushed further into poverty as a result of increased energy prices while also providing international adaptation assistance for those in the world's most vulnerable developing nations who are already facing the impacts of climate change in the form of floods, droughts and food scarcity. Finally, we urge you to support robust green jobs programs, including working training provisions that open pathways out of poverty for all Americans. Building a clean energy future is an environmental and economic justice issue and comprehensive legislation must not only protect but lift up people living poverty.

Some argue that Congress needs more time to consider environmental legislation, insisting that we cannot rush such an important task. Yet, as ice caps melt, oceans rise, and island nations and entire species become endangered, it is clear time is the one thing that we, and the planet, do not have. We are discouraged by the efforts of some in the Senate to not only oppose climate change legislation but also stop any attempts to confront the environmental and public health challenge of climate change using our most trusted existing environmental laws. We therefore urge you to oppose any attempts to obstruct or delay the EPA in acting to protect human and ecological health by regulating global warming pollution under the Clean Air Act.

We are committed to seeking climate justice for this generation and the next. This includes serving as responsible stewards for God's Creation as well as responding to the needs of the most vulnerable among us. Communities in the U.S. and around the world are already facing the consequences of climate change, and we cannot ignore the impact we are having on God's Earth and the future of our children if we fail to take action.

In Midrash Ecclesiastes Rabbah, we learn that the Creator led Adam around the Garden of Eden saying, "Look at My works. See how beautiful they are, how excellent. See to it that you do not spoil or destroy My world – for if you do, there will be no one to repair it after you." We urge you to do everything you can to address the global climate crisis and seek climate justice in a morally responsible and effective manner.

Sincerely,

Sybil Sanchez
Director
Coalition on the Environment and Jewish Life (COEJL)