

Positive Earth Day signs for Tacomans, other Earthlings with 9 years, 8 months to go

BY LINDA COHAN

APRIL 22, 2021 11:00 AM

Today, as we observe Earth Day 2021, there is true cause for celebration.

After decades of increasingly ominous warnings from scientists world-wide, 2021 may be the year that humanity takes decisive action on climate change. This is great news!

The impressive increase in actionable goals is heartening, but the ominous warnings are still there. We Earthlings have yet to commit to taking the necessary steps to ensure that global temperature rise remains below the potential tipping point of 2°C.

On the world stage, more than 110 countries including the European Union, Japan and South Korea have pledged carbon neutrality by 2050, and China by 2060.

President Biden kicked off his ambitious U.S. climate plan with dozens of executive actions. Major corporations such as Amazon, GM and Ford are making commitments to a net zero carbon future.

The U.S. returned to the Paris Agreement, setting the stage for all attendees to step up their emissions reduction pledges before the important COP26 Conference this November in Glasgow, Scotland.

Washington state enacted a 100% Clean Energy Bill in 2019 requiring utilities to produce fossil-free electricity by 2045. A number of climate bills are being debated in the current legislative session scheduled to end this weekend, including a Clean Fuel Standard, various carbon pricing policies and bills that address environmental justice.

The Pierce County Council recently passed a solid Sustainability 2030 plan, and the Tacoma City Council passed a Climate Emergency Resolution in 2019.

Why are so many countries and American government bodies setting these ambitious carbon reduction goals? Scientists are reporting that 2020 tied 2016 as the hottest year on record world-wide and that greenhouse gas emissions are already surpassing pre-COVID levels.

A landmark 2018 UN report concluded that in order to avert the worst damage to Earth's life-supporting ecosystems, we need to halve our greenhouse gas emissions by 2030, and achieve net zero by 2050.

Noting that we currently have nine years and eight months until 2030 ends, how will we do that?

A growing number of scientists have concluded that the fastest, most effective and durable solution is to put a price on carbon pollution. Business groups, including the U.S. Chamber of

Commerce, the Business Roundtable, and the American Petroleum Institute, support a market-based approach over a regulatory approach.

Further, former Federal Reserve chairs and Nobel Laureate economists call a carbon tax the “most cost-effective lever to reduce emissions.”

With the Biden administration’s focus on climate as the “number one issue facing humanity,” Congress should seriously consider a number of bills drafted by senators and representatives, both Democrat and Republican.

Republican Senators Murkowski, Graham and Romney have spoken out for pricing carbon. US Rep. Derek Kilmer, D-Gig Harbor, supports the Energy Innovation and Carbon Dividend Act, a bill which returns the revenue stream directly to American households.

So, this week, while you enjoy the splendor of spring in the Pacific Northwest, celebrate the hopeful progress on sustainable climate goals worldwide.

Then, let your members of Congress know that public polling finds a clear majority of Americans want Congress to do more to address global warming. Urge them to pass climate legislation now.

Linda Cohan is a Tacoma resident and a volunteer member of Citizens’ Climate Lobby Tacoma Chapter.



Linda Cohan of Tacoma.