

WHITMAN COUNTY GAZETTE

Letter: Carbon Fee

Thursday, August 20, 2015

Gordon Forgey's August 6 editorial, A fundamental challenge, discussed problems in the Pacific Northwest associated with climate change, including extreme drought and reduced fisheries. He called us to action "to address the changes predicted to come," regardless of our personal beliefs about the cause. I strongly agree that we must act now, and I appreciate his drawing our attention to this critical issue.

Forgey said we need "non-political thinking." Citizens' Climate Lobby (citizensclimatelobby.org) has a practical, non-partisan solution: revenue-neutral carbon fee and dividend legislation.

This market-based solution places a gradually increasing "carbon fee" on fossil fuels at their source to reflect the social costs of burning

carbon fuels, such as increased asthma. Companies would have clear market signals about the need to adjust operations. Companies prefer the clarity and simplicity of a carbon fee to pages of prescriptive government regulations. New technologies would be encouraged as the costs of these alternatives drop relative to fossil fuels. Government would not pick winners and losers, the market would.

The "revenue-neutral" part of the solution means government would not grow in size as a result of this legislation. Money collected as carbon fees would be distributed to households as monthly "dividends," injecting money into the economy, expanding consumer choice. The money would not be available for politicians' favorite pork-barrel projects. The solution

also includes adjustments for imports and exports to preserve the competitive position of U.S. industries, including agriculture, and encourage foreign governments to put an equivalent price on carbon in their countries.

Forgey's final point was that we should evaluate how national candidates will act on this issue. We can do this by asking if they would support revenue-neutral carbon fee and dividend legislation. An analysis by Regional Economic Models, Inc. showed it would add more than 2 million U.S. jobs in 10 years, while reducing US carbon emissions by 33 percent. That's a non-political, win-win solution I hope all candidates will support.

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