

Our View: Ideas abound, but public consensus still missing

Devin Rokyta, for the editorial board | Posted: Thursday, June 12, 2014 1:00 am

The one thing we have when it comes to climate change is plenty of ideas to combat or offset its effects.

Among the most recent and promising solutions is a proposed national fee and dividend carbon tax. The proposal, by the Citizens' Climate Lobby, calls for a carbon emissions fee system that will pump money back into the economy through dividends to families.

Companies would be charged a starting fee of \$10 per ton of CO₂, with an increase of \$10 a ton each year. Proceeds from those fees would in turn be passed on to American families. According to a report CCL released earlier this week, a family of four would be receiving annual checks of \$3,480 by 2025, while carbon emissions would have declined by 33 percent and 2.2 million jobs would have been added to the U.S. economy.

The plan's goal would be to increase the price of products with high carbon content, such as fuel and aluminum, pushing consumers to alternative and cleaner sources.

That all sounds great, but unfortunately, as good an idea as it may be, the proposal will have difficulty gaining traction if a public consensus on climate change can't be reached.

Many Americans are still skeptical of climate change, despite overwhelming scientific data in support of it and even as they watch their farms dry up, summers become unbearably hot and weather patterns become more severe and erratic.

Among scientists, the debate has long been over, as 97 percent say climate change is human-caused. The media, though, still treats the issue as if there were a debate to be had, much to the thrill of large energy producers and other powerful corporations, which just happen to benefit greatly from all of that CO₂ in the atmosphere choking us and causing temperatures to rise across the globe.

Until people can wade through the misinformation and be convinced of the legitimacy of the science, we can expect little to nothing to be accomplished at a national and meaningful level.