

Stop Global Warming

The Creative Ways

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So Many Options

What should we do to reduce carbon dioxide emissions. Should we:

- ★ Drive smaller cars?
- ★ Replace SUVs with big cars?
- ★ Live closer to work, or even telecommute?
- ★ Use biodiesel engines?
- ★ Hydrogen cars? Electric cars?
- ★ Bicycles?
- ★ Buses?
- ★ Subways?
- ★ Lower the thermostats in winter, raise in summer?
- ★ More insulation? More thermal mass? Smaller houses?
- ★ Use less hot water?
- ★ Use solar hot water heaters? Solar electricity?
- ★ Wind power?
- ★ Nuclear power?
- ★ Gamble on nuclear fusion research?
- ★ More insulation?
- ★ An on and on and on...

There are so many choices. We could very easily end up with dozens of expensive government programs to push for many of them and still get it wrong.

Requirements vs. Design

In the engineering world, there is a way to maximize creative potential of engineers while still allowing the marketing department to get what it wants: separate requirement from design.

Marketing determines what a product needs to do (for example, a car that is quick and comfortable, but is not too expensive), and then turns over the problems to the engineers, who then apply their creativity and knowledge of constraints to most closely achieve what is desired.

For the problem of global warming, the requirement is simply this: burn less fossil fuels. Period. That is *all* the government should specify. The choice of *how* to burn less fossil fuels can be left to the people.

Specifying the Requirement

So how does the government say “burn less fossil fuels” without getting into the issue of who and how? It’s simple. **Tax fossil fuels.**

A carbon tax is *the* most efficient way to stop global warming.

Over →

A Carbon Tax

APPLYING HOLISTIC POLITICS

If all we were concerned with was global warming, we would be nearly done. Set up a carbon tax and adjust the rate until the carbon output is at the desired level. However, there are legitimate concerns with such a tax; people concerned about other values will object. Let us see how to answer the objections with elegance instead of settling for an unsatisfying compromise.

Freedom Lover Concerns

Yet *another* tax?! Bleah! We are overtaxed already! Propose a new tax and the freedom lovers will come for screaming with good reason.

But suppose we were to use a carbon tax to *replace* an existing tax. Then the overall tax level could be the same.

Actually, there are many advantages to a carbon tax from a freedom lover's perspective.

- ★ It would require little paperwork. Carbon is easy to measure (compared to income).
- ★ This would require very few tax collectors. We could collect the tax at the most visible locations, such as oil refineries, coal fired power plants and gas pipelines.
- ★ The tax would be very visible. It would show up at the gas pump and on the electric bill. People would be reminded of the taxes they are paying on a regular basis.
- ★ It taxes a natural resource (who no human created) so is less a violation of natural rights.

If a carbon tax was used to replace the personal income tax, it would be a huge step in the direction of more liberty. It could be sold to freedom lovers who don't even believe in global warming!

Progressive Concerns

Let's see, a tax that shows up on the electric bill and the heating oil bill... That's going to hit the poor rather hard!

True, the rich burn more fuel, since they have bigger houses, bigger cars/trucks and they fly more, but carbon use is probably less than proportional to income. To replace the income tax with a carbon tax would be rather regressive, alas.

But the Social Security tax is already regressive! Unlike income tax, it has only two brackets, one for the working class, and a zero percent bracket for income above a certain level. Replacing the Social Security tax with a carbon tax might be a wash or even be progressive.

We can also balance out the regressive effect of a carbon tax by sending everyone a rebate check on part of the total collected. This would have the same effect that the personal exemption and the standard deduction has for the income tax. But unlike the income tax, we don't have to track everyone's economic activity individually. This would still be an indirect tax.

For more complete details, see "Stop Global Warming" at www.HolisticPolitics.org.