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Climate Security Act: A Realistic, Achievable Response to Global Warming

he overwhelming, and often downright depressing, consequences of global warming are all around us. Those of us closest to the land—most of us Montanans who hunt, fish, raise grain or cattle, hike, camp, or cut timber—are seeing the impacts first hand; witnessing what scientists have been warning us about for years. It's a troublesome web of problems: higher temperatures, diminishing snowpacks, earlier spring runoffs, low stream flows, more drought and increased frequency and intensity of mountain pine beetle infestations and wildfire. We are only beginning to see the related, serious impacts to fish, wildlife, irrigation, human health and our western way of life. It's an issue that requires attention and action.

It's easy to fall into a despondent mood of gloom and doom. But there is some good news. Fortunately (and thanks, in no small part, to the Montana Wildlife Federation, affiliate clubs, and other hunters and anglers from around the state) citizens are speaking up and our leaders are beginning to respond.

A new bipartisan effort moving through the U.S. Senate is a major step toward tackling global warming. Senator John Warner (R-VA) and Senator Joe Lieberman (I-CT) recently introduced America's Climate Security Act of 2007. This is a strong bill that deals with the root cause of global warming – greenhouse gas emissions – at the scale needed to credibly put the United States in a leadership role globally. The bill requires large emitters such as power plants and oil refineries to collectively cut their greenhouse gas emissions every year, starting in 2012, at a pace scientists say is needed to avoid catastrophic climate changes. It sets the pace for reductions at about 2 percent per year, cutting emissions to 15% below current levels by the year 2020, and 70% below current levels by 2050. The bill will also provide funding to state fish and wildlife agencies, such as Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks, to help protect, restore and enhance habitat to help fish and wildlife adequately adapt to climate change. In addition, the bill will help low-income families by providing detailed provisions to aid a just transition to a clean energy future for low- and middle-income families. A significant amount of revenue generated from the cap and trade system will be used for programs such as the Low Income Weatherization Assistance Program targeting those hit hardest by the impacts of global warming. The bill also provides resources for training a clean energy workforce to not only reduce emissions of greenhouse gasses, but reduce our nation's dependence on foreign gas and oil. Additionally, money will be put into research and technology to help find alternative and renewable sources of energy, and more efficient ways of using and extracting energy, such as sequestering carbon from coal before it is processed, and developing more fuel-efficient automobiles.

As Senator Max Baucus said during a recent meeting in Missoula: "We don't need to sacrifice; we just need to be more responsible."

Senator Baucus recently pledged his support of the Climate Security Act, as did Sen. Jon Tester. As chairman of the U.S. Senate Finance Committee, and senior member of the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee, Senator Baucus is in a very influential position. Montanans should thank him for supporting this effort, and urge him to continue taking an aggressive, leadership role in endorsing, promoting and passing this important legislation. The defining issue of the 21st century is whether or not we will muster the political will to confront

global warming. This is not an issue of left or right; it is an issue of right or wrong. The time to act is now. Fortunately, people are speaking out and our leaders are beginning to respond.

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