

Dear Friends:

Are you, too, beginning to get the sense that the American people are waking up to the fact that climate change is real and that we, as a nation, must begin to significantly reduce the greenhouse gas pollution that is putting this beautiful planet at risk? That's my impression based on some of the events that I've described below. Melting ice caps, threatened extinction of polar bears, unseasonable storms and heat waves, and conservative evangelical leaders acknowledging that their spiritual charge is to be good stewards of the earth are the stories that are making the news, but it's also the impression that the climate is changing so quickly and on so many fronts, that is pushing Americans to act locally by reducing their energy consumption, adding solar panels to their homes, and demanding that their State and local officials act in the absence of federal leadership.

If we can increase that local pressure – remember we have real power and influence within our cities and local institutions - we'll begin to see evidence that the country is developing the political will to join the rest of the world in a comprehensive effort to conserve energy, develop greater capacity for clean, renewable sources of energy, and to wean ourselves off our addiction to oil (and all fossil fuels) that President Bush finally acknowledged in his State of the Union address.

What makes me so optimistic, you might wonder? It comes from a number of recent events that indicate that we are actually making some progress - that the energy revolution has begun in the US – and no one, including the federal government or the fossil fuel industry or the global warming naysayers, is going to stop it. Here's what I have observed over the last few months that has convinced me that we are beginning to overcome the inertia that has set us apart from the rest of the world:

- 1) [The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change](#) met in Montreal in November. The countries that have signed the Kyoto Protocol agreed to begin discussions on emissions reductions targets for the next phase of the Kyoto Protocol which begins in 2013 when the current phase expires. Here's the remarkable thing about that outcome: the US did everything in its power to prevent the signatories from reaching this agreement – and in the end the US failed. The signatories agreed to a process that addresses both the current emissions reduction requirements and those that will follow in the post 2013 period. The world community ignored the U.S., in part, because they recognize that our current government is becoming increasingly isolated on this issue and that U.S. policies will eventually change.
- 2) Senator John Kerry and Congressman Henry Waxman have written a scorching letter to Dr. Paula Dobriansky, head of the US delegation responsible for representing the U.S. in the Montreal climate talks. The letter demands to know why the U.S. intentionally distorted the truth about the growth of greenhouse gas emissions that the U.S. produces. You can read the Kerry-Waxman letter and the KyotoUSA letter of support at our website www.kyotousa.org. This letter follows closely on a hastily drafted letter by 24 Senators (including 4 Republicans) sent to President Bush near the close of the Montreal talks demanding that the U.S. exert a leadership role in reducing greenhouse gases and become more cooperative with the global community.
- 3) 86 representatives from evangelical churches across the country signed on to greenhouse gas reduction strategy described as the [Evangelical Climate Initiative](#) (ECI), in defiance of their umbrella organization, the National Association of Evangelicals

(NAE). The NAE had previously stated that work on climate change should be a priority, but caved in from pressure from a small, but vocal group of evangelicals that are generally supportive of the Bush agenda – no matter what it is. The ECI is a very real indication that the message is starting to sink in across America.

- 4) The 14 cities that make up Alameda County are joining together to come up with a county-wide greenhouse gas reduction program. Initiated by Berkeley Mayor, Tom Bates, the Alameda County Conference of Mayors has endorsed the idea in principal and is now working with [ICLEI's Cities for Climate Protection Campaign](#) and the County's [StopWaste.org](#) to begin organizing a county wide response. I will be sending out another message within the week to ask those of you who reside in Alameda County to work with KyotoUSA and your city government to make this happen.
- 5) Locally, citizens in Albany, Alameda, and Lafayette are organizing to urge their city governments to get active on climate change. This type of citizen-driven activity is absolutely essential to the success of any local government effort to reduce their GHGs.

I will be in touch again next week to tell you more about the actions that are taking place in Alameda County and to encourage your participation in the city you live in. Remember, much of the response to climate change that is occurring in the U.S. today is being driven by the grassroots. This is an issue that is beginning to coalesce all over the country and lends itself to citizen participation. Now's the time to get involved. All the best!

Tom