

## Climate proposals threaten pursuit of happiness and justice

New study documents harmful effects of “cap-and-trade” and “endangerment” schemes

Paul Driessen

Environmental justice demands that the United States address global warming, the gravest threat facing minority Americans, insist the EPA, Congressional Black Caucus and White House. Are they serious?

The alleged threat pales next to unwed teen motherhood, school dropouts, murder and other crime. But even assuming human carbon dioxide emissions will cause average global temperatures to rise a few degrees more than they have already since the Little Ice Age ended, it is absurd to suggest that any such warming would harm minorities more than policies imposed in the name of preventing climate change.

Human activities have not replaced the complex natural forces that drove climate change throughout Earth’s history. But even if manmade greenhouse gases do contribute to planetary warming, slashing US emissions to zero would bring no benefit, because steadily rising emissions from China, India, Brazil and other rapidly growing economies would almost instantly replace whatever gases we cease emitting.

Most important, fossil fuels power the economic engine that ensures justice and opportunity in America today. Policies that make energy less reliable and affordable reduce business revenues and profits, shrink investment and innovation, imperil economic recovery, and hobble job creation, civil rights, and the pursuit of happiness and the American dream.

Whether they take the form of cap-and-trade, carbon taxes, restrictions on drilling and coal mining, or EPA rules under its claim that carbon dioxide “endangers” human health and welfare, anti-energy policies frustrate the natural desire of poor and minority Americans to improve their lives.

As to coping with higher temperatures, restrictive energy policies send electricity prices skyrocketing, making it harder for low-income households to afford air conditioning, and putting lives at risk. They send poor families back to pre-AC misery of bygone eras, like the 1896 heat wave that killed 1,300 people in New York City’s sweltering tenements. In wintertime, they make heating less affordable, again putting lives at risk.

I recently documented the connection between energy policies and civil rights. My “Justice through Affordable Energy for Wisconsin” report focuses on the Dairy State, where I grew up. However, its lessons apply to every state, especially the 26 that get 48-98% of their electricity from coal or have a strong manufacturing base. (The full report can be found at [www.CFACT.org](http://www.CFACT.org))

Energy is the foundation for America’s jobs, living standards, and everything we make, grow, eat, wear, transport and do. Climate change bills, energy taxes and renewable energy mandates deliberately restrict supplies of reliable, affordable hydrocarbon energy – sending shockwaves through the economy.

Fossil fuels generate three-fourths of Wisconsin’s electricity, keeping costs low and enabling its \$45-billion-a-year manufacturing sector to compete in a tough global marketplace. Hydrocarbons sustain thousands of jobs in agriculture, tourism and other sectors of the state’s economy. They ensure that hospitals and clinics can offer high-tech diagnostic, surgical and treatment services.

They enable school districts, families, churches, shops and government offices to operate in the black. Soaring fuel and electricity prices would force schools to spend millions more for buses, heating and lighting. That would mean higher taxes – or reduced music, sports, language and special education programs. Poor and minority neighborhoods would be impacted worst.

Small and minority businesses are often young and undercapitalized. Increasing their operating costs, while decreasing the disposable income of their customers, puts them on the verge of bankruptcy.

“A single worker in our Rhinelander fabrication plant can do the work of ten who do not have access to cranes, welding machines, plasma burners and all other machinery that allows us to cut, bend and

fabricate steel up to six inches thick, and make all kinds of heavy equipment,” says Oldenburg Group executive vice president Tim Nerenz. But the machinery and facilities are energy-intensive. If energy costs rise, the company would have to cut wages and benefits or lay off workers, as contract prices are fixed and overseas competition is fierce.

Indoor pools and other facilities make tourism a year-round industry, sustaining local economies during frigid Wisconsin winters, making resorts like the Chula Vista Resort in Wisconsin Dells popular jumping-off points for cross country skiing, snowmobiling and dining. Rising energy costs would reduce family vacations, hammer bottom lines, force layoffs, and cause foreclosures throughout these communities.

In every case, it is blue-collar workers, low and moderate income families, minorities and the elderly that are affected most severely.

Nor are these impacts likely to be offset by “green” jobs. As Spain, Germany and other countries have discovered, wind and solar power require constant infusions of money from increasingly strapped taxpayers and energy consumers. When the economy sours, the subsidies disappear, and so do the jobs.

Wind and solar electricity is expensive, intermittent and unreliable – necessitating expensive gas-powered backup generators, and further damaging family and business budgets. Plus, most of the jobs will be in China and India, where low energy and labor costs, and access to rare earths and other raw materials that America refuses to mine, supply wind turbine and solar panel factories that easily under-price US firms.

The entire cap-tax-and-trade, renewable energy and green-jobs edifice is a house of cards, propped up by claims that humans are affecting the Earth’s climate. As EPA and EPA Administrator Lisa Jackson repeatedly assert, “Climate change is already happening, and human activity is a contributor.”

However, that is not the issue. The issue is whether our use of fossil fuels is now the dominant factor in global warming and cooling, and whether future manmade climate change will be catastrophic. There is no replicable or credible evidence to support that proposition.

Headline-grabbing disaster scenarios forecast for 50 or 100 years in the future are the product of speculation, assumptions, unreliable computer models, and articles by climate activists falsely presented as peer-reviewed scientific papers in IPCC reports, news stories and political speeches. As my Wisconsin study explains, they are not supported by actual data and observations regarding historic and current global temperatures, ice caps, glaciers, sea levels, rainforests or cyclical weather patterns.

Energy taxes and subsidies, renewable energy mandates, soaring prices for everything we need – and severe impacts on families, businesses, jobs, opportunities, living standards and basic civil rights – might be justified if we did indeed face a manmade climate disaster. But even then we should carefully examine the costs and benefits of any proposed actions.

We should determine whether slashing fossil fuel use will stabilize our planet’s ever-turbulent climate, and whether our limited resources might be better spent on adapting to future changes, natural and manmade, just as our ancestors did.

If global warming science is inaccurate, dishonest, slanted or fraudulent, there is even less justification.

We cannot have justice without opportunity, or opportunity without energy. We cannot have justice by sharing scarcity, poverty and skyrocketing energy prices more equally – especially on the basis of erroneous, speculative or manipulated climate science.

We must therefore be forever vigilant, to ensure that Congress does not slip cap-tax-and-trade proposals through during a post-election lame-duck session – and EPA does not shackle our economy and civil rights progress with its job-killing “endangerment” rules.

Paul Driessen is senior policy advisor for the Committee For A Constructive Tomorrow (CFACT) and Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), and author of *Eco-Imperialism: Green power - Black death*.