

Opinion: Tahoe climate lobby makes its case

By Jeff Miner

On Aug. 28 representatives from the South Lake Tahoe chapter of the Citizens Climate Lobby met with staff of state Sen. Ted Gaines, R-El Dorado, to ask the senator to support a measure urging Congress to enact a fee on carbon-based fossil fuels. Passage of the measure (Assembly Joint Resolution 43) would be a strong show of support by California legislators that the United States needs powerful new policies to meet the greenhouse gas emission reductions goals established in the 2015 Paris Climate Agreement.

The group brought to their attention recent studies that predict a radically altered future for the Sierra Nevada due to climate changes. The California Department of Water Resources projects that we will lose between 50 to 65 percent of our snowpack by the end of the century; and the Tahoe Environmental Research Center recently released a study showing that Lake Tahoe is warming 15 times faster than the long-term average.

“We can no longer ignore the enormous, hidden costs of burning fossil fuels – costs including disaster relief, health problems and reduced water supplies. Prices must reflect these costs,” said Bonnie Turnbull, one of three CCL representatives that met with Gaines’ office. “Passage of this legislation shows that California demands Congressional action to avert the worst costs and consequences of climate change.”

Gaines’ representative made no promises in regards to the senator’s support of the bill, acknowledging while there are clear negative impacts associated with the use of fossil fuels, that the senator had questions about the costs

associated with moving to an alternative energy economy.

CCL representatives pointed to a recent report released by Regional Economic Models Inc. that predicted after 10 years, a revenue-neutral carbon tax would not only decrease carbon dioxide emissions by 33 percent, but would increase national employment by 2.1 million jobs.

“There is absolutely no question that the cost of not taxing carbon is much higher than the costs associated with transitioning to an alternative energy economy,” said Patricia Sussman, who attended the meeting.

The concept of a carbon fee is not new, but has been gaining traction as the effects of climate change are becoming more widely reported and published. Advocates of such a fee point out that it could be implemented quickly and efficiently and would push the markets to advance clean energy technologies; and incentivize other countries to enact similar legislation, thereby reducing carbon emissions globally.

The International Panel on Climate Change states that while we cannot reverse the effects of climate change, we do have the opportunity to stabilize atmospheric warming and thus reduce the threats associated with worse case climate scenarios.

“I feel that there is a moral imperative for future generations. I am saddened by the lack of involvement by politicians,” said Karen Duron, who also made the trek to Gaines’ Sacramento office.

Citizens’ Climate Lobby is a nonprofit, non-partisan, grassroots advocacy organization focused on national policies to address climate change.

Jeff Miner is a member of the South Lake Tahoe chapter of the Citizens Climate Lobby.