

Urge national legislators to support meaningful climate action

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The climate agreement reached by delegates from nearly 200 countries in Paris on December 12th includes some significant steps forward. It acknowledges that the average global temperature rise must be limited to less than 2° C (3.6° F) over pre-industrial levels. And it states that in order to achieve this target, the world must reach net zero greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions between 2050 and 2100.

The agreement also has a few significant gaps. One such gap is that the voluntary curbs and cuts in GHG emissions set forth by the negotiating parties would likely result in an eventual temperature rise of 2.7° to 3.7° C, which would put the world well over the line of climate catastrophe. If we are to avoid this fate, countries will need to step up their commitments significantly by 2020 when those goals are scheduled to be reviewed and updated.

The agreement is weaker than it should be largely due to opposition in the U.S. Congress to limiting our country's GHG emissions and to providing economic assistance to less wealthy countries to limit theirs. This opposition has no basis in science. Rather, it comes from a desire to protect the interests of fossil fuel corporations at the expense the environment and of the vast majority of people on the planet.

Here in Fort Collins, we have managed to avoid political gridlock on this issue. Registered Republicans joined with registered Democrats on City Council earlier this year to unanimously approve ambitious climate goals including net zero GHG emissions by 2050. Hopefully, this foreshadows a sea change nationally, where recent polling data shows that over half of all Republicans believe that the climate is changing and that human activity is playing a role.

Congress needs to better represent the will of the people. The Fort Collins Sustainability Group (FCSG) encourages Coloradoan readers – especially Republicans who understand the threat posed by anthropogenic climate change – to speak out. Please call or write to Senator Bennet, Senator Gardner, and Representative Polis to urge them to support meaningful climate action, including putting an honest price on carbon.

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Sources:

1. Outcome of climate talks: <http://350.org/what-the-paris-agreement-does-and-doesnt-do/> and <http://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2015/dec/13/climate-change-paris-deal-cop21-obama-administration-congress-republicans-environment>.
2. Polling data on Republican views on climate: http://polling.clearpath.org/docs/clearpath_survey_report.pdf.