

QUAKER ECO-BULLETIN

*Information and Action Addressing Public Policy
for an Ecologically Sustainable World*

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Climate, Energy, and Human Security: FCNL Seeking an Earth Restored

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The 110th Congress began early and with new intensity in January. New leadership, new priorities, new hopes and expectations, and a pent-up demand for legislative action on a wide range of concerns fueled the accelerated pace.

This came none too soon for climate, energy, and human security concerns. The U.S. and world today are facing two mounting threats to basic human security due to our dependence on fossil fuels: harmful climate change and deadly conflicts over oil.

The Friends Committee on National Legislation (FCNL) is well-positioned in its new, green building on Capitol Hill and with its nationwide grassroots network to educate and advocate for energy conservation, improved energy efficiency, and accelerated development and use of renewable energy.

Averting Harmful Climate Change

Greenhouse gas emissions from burning fossil fuels and other human activities are accelerating global warming and climate changes around the earth. Eleven of the last twelve years have been among the twelve warmest years on record. Glaciers are shrinking, the Arctic tundra and sea ice are melting, species ranges are shifting, sea levels are rising, and extreme weather events are increasing in frequency and intensity. Poor and vulnerable populations are already feeling the effects—from Alaska natives, to hurricane-prone coastal communities, to communities exposed to intensified droughts, heat waves, wildfires, and flooding.

If greenhouse gas emissions from human activities continue to grow, climate change effects are likely to become more extreme, threatening food production, fresh water resources, public health, the survival of species, whole ecosystems, and hundreds of millions now living in low-lying coastal areas around the world. Poor and vulnerable populations will continue to be at greatest risk, as they often are more readily exposed to harmful climate events and have the least capacity to adapt.

Scientists say we must reduce our greenhouse gas emissions as soon as possible. Heeding these warnings and uniting in global action for the common good is perhaps the greatest moral challenge facing our country and world today.

The U.S. has a key role to play. The U.S. is the world's largest emitter of greenhouse gases, and emissions over the past century from the U.S. and the industrialized world are the

principal human factors contributing to the climate changes that the world is experiencing today. Other countries, such as China and India, are unlikely to act to avert harmful climate change without U.S. leadership.

Preventing Deadly Conflict over Oil

Today our nation is divided, distracted, and consumed by war and the quest for absolute global military supremacy in large part because of our dangerous oil dependence. The U.S. and world are increasingly dependent on shrinking petroleum reserves that are concentrated in the most politically unstable parts of the world.

The U.S. is the world's largest oil consumer. Oil is the largest source of energy used in the U.S. Our country's transportation system, upon which the economy depends, is almost totally dependent on petroleum-based fuels. The U.S. is relying increasingly on imports to meet its needs, importing almost two-thirds of its oil from abroad today.

Oil demand is rising elsewhere, as well—especially in China, India, and the developing world.

Yet U.S. oil production has been declining and global oil production is barely keeping up with demand. Few significant new reserves of conventional oil have been discovered in recent decades, and hence, the scramble is on by the major oil-importing countries (e.g. the U.S., EU, China, Japan, India) to secure access to the remaining global supplies.

This tight global oil market has become highly sensitive to supply disruptions. The risk of supply disruption is growing—whether due to war, civil strife, sabotage, labor strikes, market speculators, disruptions caused by the OPEC cartel, governments of oil-exporting countries, multinational oil companies, or hurricanes and accidents. When disruptions occur, prices soar, economic growth in import-dependent countries slows, and the poorest people and the poorest countries get hurt the most.

Consequently, petroleum insecurity increasingly has been a driving factor in U.S. foreign and military policy, leading to the militarization of U.S. foreign policies, dramatically increased U.S. military expenditures, threats of war, and war. Most of the conflicts in which the U.S. is engaged today are

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The vision of **Quaker Earthcare Witness (QEW)** includes integrating into the beliefs and practices of the Society of Friends the Truths that God's Creation is to be held in reverence in its own right, and that human aspirations for peace and justice depend upon restoring the Earth's ecological integrity. As a member organization of Friends Committee on National Legislation, QEW seeks to strengthen Friends' support for FCNL's witness in Washington DC for peace, justice, and an Earth restored.

QEB's purpose is to advance Friends' witness on public and institutional policies that affect the Earth's capacity to support life. QEB articles aim to inform Friends about public and corporate policies that have an impact on society's relationship to Earth, and to provide analysis and critique of societal trends and institutions that threaten the health of the planet.

Friends are invited to contact us about writing an article for **QEB**. Submissions are subject to editing and should:

- Explain why the issue is a Friends' concern.
- Provide accurate, documented background information that reflects the complexity of the issue and is respectful toward other points of view.
- Relate the issue to legislation or corporate policy.
- List what Friends can do.
- Provide references and sources for additional information.

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linked in some way to oil wealth, oil geo-politics, or oil dependence—from the war in Iraq, to the war in Afghanistan and the rise of al Qaeda, to the crisis in Darfur, to U.S. diplomatic confrontations with Iran and Venezuela. In the future, the U.S. and China, in particular, are on a collision course over oil.

If War Is Not the Answer, What Is?

The U.S. can and should choose a different path to human security. We in the U.S. have all the creativity, ingenuity, technology, and know-how today that are needed to end our dependence on oil and other fossil fuels. What we need are strong national policies that will encourage:

- Less driving and more public transit use, walking, biking, and car-pooling;
- Reducing consumption, reusing materials, and recycling;
- Making our cars and trucks much more fuel-efficient;
- Developing renewable biofuels from human, agricultural, and forestry waste;
- Expanding and improving public transit;
- Reducing the energy consumed by our homes and buildings;
- Developing new renewable energy and energy-saving technologies;
- Expanding the use of solar and wind power;
- Making our existing power plants and transmission systems more efficient;
- Making our appliances more efficient;
- Slowing population growth by investing in human development, and providing safe, effective, non-coercive, universal access to family planning services;
- Practicing no-till agriculture and expanding conservation reserves to absorb carbon;
- Reducing greenhouse-gas-intensive livestock production and meat consumption;
- Halting deforestation and planting new, permanent forests; and
- Working with other countries to do all of the same.

Steps such as these will dramatically reduce greenhouse gas emissions and put the world well on its way toward a more secure and sustainable future.

A Changing Political Climate

Little of this will happen to the degree that is urgently needed unless the president and Congress unite and make these their top budget and policy priorities. For the past several years, the political will to do what needs to be done simply did not exist in Washington, D.C. However, that has begun to change recently.

Scientific evidence of accelerating climate change is mounting. The news media are reporting it more frequently. Compelling, feature-length documentaries such as "An Inconvenient Truth" and "The Great Warming" have been seen widely. Public concern is growing appreciably. State and local governments are developing their own policies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Wall Street investors and major corporations are assessing both their financial exposure to harmful climate change and new business opportunities in a carbon-limited future.

In just the first few months of the 110th Congress, dozens of hearings have been held on climate and energy policy, and dozens of bills have been introduced. The House and Senate leadership are determined to pass legislation this year.

Yet there is still a long way to go to build public concern and support for the strong actions that will be needed to address these challenges and to move Congress and the President to act. On both sides of the aisle in Congress significant barriers remain to the kind of comprehensive, economy-transforming policies that are needed, and President Bush continues to oppose any legislation that would require mandatory reductions in greenhouse gas emissions.

What Can FCNL Do to Make a Difference?

Address global climate change and protect the environment by reducing U.S. fossil fuel consumption through energy conservation, improved efficiency, and accelerated development and use of renewable energy sources. Establish equitable and sustainable use of the world's natural resources by participating in and complying with multilateral environmental agreements. (FCNL Legislative Priority for the 110th Congress, November 2006)

What can FCNL do to make a difference in a very crowded, well-financed field of environmental and industry lobby-

ists—with one lobbyist, a relatively small, but vocal and dedicated grassroots network, and the only green building on Capitol Hill?

We can speak prophetically from the moral foundation of our faith and practice. Our witness for an earth restored arises organically from our historic testimonies of peace, equality, simplicity, honesty, and integrity. We can recognize that, though our numbers may be small, our effect can be great, as it has been throughout our Quaker history. We can evaluate and compare proposed legislation through the lens of our faith and practice and living testimonies.

For example, we can raise up concern for poor and vulnerable populations at home and abroad. For hundreds of millions of people around the world today, energy poverty poses as great a threat to human security as the threat of harmful climate change, and these same populations are also often the most vulnerable to the harmful effects of climate change. Climate and energy policies must equitably and sustainably address both aspects of human security—reducing energy poverty and averting harmful climate change. The costs of averting harmful climate change should not be borne by those who are least able to afford it.

We can ask questions that others are not asking, but that should be asked. We are not constrained in our queries and advocacy by political expediency, narrow self-interest, or partisanship. Our concern is for restoring the earth for future generations with justice and compassion. We are called to speak our truth as we understand it.

For example, we at FCNL have advocated for raising gasoline taxes and carbon tax shifting—potentially powerful policy mechanisms to shift the economy away from oil dependence and fossil fuels toward energy conservation, energy efficiency, and renewable energy, while providing essential off-sets in the tax code to help low- and middle-income households adapt to a sustainable energy future. Many analysts think higher gasoline taxes and carbon tax shifting would be a good way to reduce U.S. dependence on fossil fuels, but few on Capitol Hill or in the environmental community are willing to suggest any policy with the word “tax” in it. We ask why and challenge Congress to consider it along with other approaches.

We can put our building to good use to promote legislation to set national standards for high-performance, energy-efficient, green buildings. Buildings in the U.S. account for about 40 percent of all U.S. energy consumption and about 10 percent of total global greenhouse gas emissions. Adopting stricter national building codes and incentives could go a long way toward reducing our country's greenhouse gas emissions.

Principles and Queries for Climate and Energy Policies

Earth Care: Is the proposed policy likely to protect and restore the life-sustaining capacities of the earth and avert harmful, extreme climate change? Does it reflect generally accepted scientific understanding of earth, ocean, climate, and human interactions? Are its objectives, scope, magnitude, and timing consistent with scientific evidence and understanding? Will it begin reducing greenhouse gas emissions soon enough and in sufficient quantities to prevent greenhouse gas concentrations from reaching dangerous levels?

Simplicity: Will the proposed policy encourage conservation of resources, discourage wasteful consumption, and encourage ecologically sustainable living and communities?

Respect for Human Dignity: Does the proposed policy reflect respect for the basic human dignity of all people who are and will be affected? Will the proposed policy provide for the basic human security needs of poor and vulnerable people who are at greatest risk of harm from global climate change? Will it provide for the needs of workers and communities who may become displaced because of the new policy? Does the policy recognize and address the extensive energy poverty that exists around the world today?

Good Governance: Can the policy be implemented effectively, efficiently, transparently, and accountably? Are sufficient budgetary resources being committed to carry it out? Is it designed to achieve its objectives by the least costly and burdensome means, conserving scarce resources? Does it provide adequate opportunities for public participation, comment, and engagement?

We Seek an Earth Restored

(Excerpts from the FCNL Statement of Legislative Policy)

On FCNL's spiritual underpinnings of seeking an earth restored. ...

"The earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof; the world, and they that dwell in it." (Psalms 24:1) We believe that humankind must respect the ecological integrity and the sacredness of the natural world.

We are convinced that all on this earth are interdependent, and we cherish the sacred value of the natural world as God's creation. Impelled by both the sacred and the practical, and inspired by Friends' testimonies, we seek an earth restored.

FCNL perspectives on climate, energy, population, consumption, and human security. . .

Environmental degradation and resource scarcity are among the underlying causes of violence and war.

The failure to confront the problems of population growth and over-consumption will endanger the finite home planet that all people share.

Over-consumption [in the U.S.] not only threatens the global environment, but also sows the seeds of war and reduces the resources available to meet the world's needs.

We believe that the right use and sharing of the world's resources for energy are crucial to human survival and welfare.

All people need equitable access to sources of energy for personal needs and the development of their communities.

Energy policies should be based on global humanitarian and environmental concerns rather than narrow commercial, military, or national interests.

The price of energy should reflect its full social and environmental cost.

The great risk to the environment and to future generations posed by increased use of fossil fuels and nuclear energy requires a shift to renewable and less damaging energy sources, increased efficiency, and conservation.

On the kinds of policies FCNL advocates to address climate and energy challenges. . .

- *developing strong, fair, and effective policies to reduce the emission of greenhouse gases;*
- *promoting energy conservation through federal standards and regulations that reduce fuel consumption and increase efficiency for stationary and mobile emission sources;*
- *instituting taxing and pricing policies that more fully reflect and publicize the economic, environmental, and social costs of energy production and use;*
- *[an] explicit moratorium on the construction of nuclear fission power plants;*
- *promotion of research and development of sustainable energy technologies for domestic use and export;*
- *adopting incentives for the production and use of renewable energy;*
- *removing regulatory barriers to renewable onsite power generation and distribution;*
- *access to, and adequate financial and institutional support for, effective, universally available, safe, and non-coercive family planning in the United States and throughout the world;*
- *economic policies that will sustain general prosperity without high levels of consumption; and*
- *ratifying and implementing international agreements.*

Many members of Congress and even more congressional staff have toured the building and seen what is possible to do in building design and renovation today. Many more will be coming through in the coming months as part of an FCNL legislative campaign to promote stronger standards for new and renovated buildings. A number of bills are already pending, and even better ones are in the works. There is a good chance that Congress will enact good legislation to promote energy-efficient, green buildings during the 110th Congress.

Finally, we can proceed with love, faith, and hope, following our leading, speaking our truth, walking "cheerfully over the world, answering that of God in every one," doing our part, and trusting in the spirit to bring things around right in God's time.

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What Can Friends Do?

- 1) Contact your members of Congress. They need to hear your support for strong legislation to reduce U.S. greenhouse gas emissions and dangerous oil dependence.
- 2) Challenge 2008 presidential and congressional candidates to make reducing greenhouse gas emissions and oil dependence their top priority. We need stronger presidential and congressional support for change.
- 3) Sign up for FCNL's Climate & Energy Email Updates. Receive legislative action alerts and information specifically on climate and energy issues. Go to the FCNL web site www.fcnl.org or call toll free 800-630-1330. Find out more about FCNL efforts to avert harmful climate change and to end U.S. oil dependence. **For more information, contact:** Ned Stowe, Friends Committee on National Legislation, 245 Second Street, NE, Washington, DC, 20002. Phone: 202-547-6000. Or email ned@fcnl.org.
- 4) Contribute to FCNL and QEW. Both depend on contributions from concerned individuals like you.