

Faith Economy Ecology Working Group
c/o Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns
P.O. Box 20132; Washington DC 20017

April 26, 2010

Dear Senator:

As representatives of 40 faith-based and ecologically focused groups with deep connections to communities in the global South, we see and hear of how climate change is already wreaking havoc in the lives of people who have contributed least to greenhouse gas emissions. We urge Congress to move swiftly by joining Senators Cantwell and Collins in moving the Clean Limits and Energy for America's Renewal (CLEAR) Act, S.2877.

Now is a critical time. Following the Climate Summit in Copenhagen there is global momentum to put in place structures and systems that help to slow down global warming and its destructive outcomes. As countries around the world are working to be leaders in sustainable energy markets, we urge you to seize this historical opportunity. The United States simply must play a critical role and not fall behind. U.S. citizens, our brothers and sisters around the world and Earth itself are negatively impacted by the generation of pollution and waste that over-consumption of fossil fuel-based resources have caused. Your leadership can help put in place incentives for U.S. citizens to lead the world in designing new ways of living that respect Earth's carrying capacity.

We are enthusiastic about the CLEAR Act, introduced by Sen. Maria Cantwell (WA) and Sen. Susan Collins (ME) in December 2009. It outlines a promising structure for the United States. to reduce its carbon footprint while encouraging the development of alternative, sustainable energy systems.

CLEAR Act highlights:

- It is simple; the bill is 39 pages long.
- The CLEAR Act stipulates 100 percent auction of pollution permits, which means that those most responsible for harmful greenhouse gas emissions will have to pay commensurate to the amount they pollute. Although this measure is designed to encourage the most efficient emissions reductions, it will also increase carbon-based energy prices. To ensure that low to middle-income consumers are held unharmed, the CLEAR Act provides an "energy security dividend," which will return 75 percent of the pollution revenue collected by the government equally to all U.S. residents on a monthly basis. The remaining 25 percent of carbon revenue would be deposited into a fund to be used in the annual congressional appropriations process. We foresee these aspects of the bill as being very popular among many U.S. constituencies.
- The CLEAR Act does not include the carbon offsets proposed in other congressional climate legislation to substitute for U.S. industry pollution reductions. Offsets not only delay research and investment in new alternative energy; but according

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to the Government Accountability Office, they are very difficult to consistently verify as real emissions reductions.

- It is urgent that the United States embark on a program to ensure verifiable and enforceable greenhouse gas emissions. Legislation is critically important as is enforcement. We are happy to see that the Cantwell Collins bill proposes to maintain the Environmental Protection Agency as the government entity to set minimum standards for the largest greenhouse gas emitters.

- We watched with horror in 2009 when food and fuel prices rose in part because of excessive speculation in commodity markets, triggering food insecurity and riots in countries around the world. This experience leaves us leery of carbon markets - and we are pleased to see that the CLEAR Act limits participation in the carbon market to those companies who must turn in carbon permits for compliance - leaving Wall Street and other traders out.

Recommended CLEAR Act improvements:

- The greatest impact of U.S. greenhouse gas emissions is being felt in the developing world. We are especially committed to ensuring that the United States act on its responsibility to assist these countries by providing dedicated international climate funding. We recommend a specific set-aside of the income from the sale of carbon permits in the CLEAR Act to assist these poor nations, both to address the destructive impacts of global warming and to help them move toward sustainable, low-carbon development.

- Because of its history as the largest historical emitter of greenhouse gas emissions, we believe that the United States has a special responsibility to substantially mitigate its emissions. The CLEAR Act sets near-term emission reductions at 20 percent below 2005 levels by 2020. Though this is more rigorous than the House proposal requiring 17 percent by 2020, we believe the targets should be stronger. We also recommend that additional mechanisms be included in the CLEAR Act that ensure that CERT fund spending is appropriated in accordance to the bill's overall emissions reduction goals.

In conclusion, we reiterate our request for you to seize this moment to help reverse the negative impact of climate change that people in the United States and around the world are already experiencing. While women and children are the most severely impacted by climate change, the entire balance of life on Earth is at stake. The CLEAR Act represents the most straightforward, long-term politically feasible route to respond to this crisis and guide the United States to a future with domestically produced sustainable energy.

Sincerely,

The Affording Hope Project
ALEPH: Alliance for Jewish Renewal
Center of Concern
Collaborative Center for Justice, Inc.
Columban Center for Advocacy and Outreach
Community Action for Justice in the Americas, Africa, Asia (CAJA)
Congregation of St. Joseph Justice Team
Dominican Sisters, Grand Rapids

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Fargo Presentation Sisters' Peace and Justice Center
Friends Committee on National Legislation
Holy Cross International Justice Office
Holy Spirit Missionary Sisters, JPIC - USA
Institute Justice Team, Sisters of Mercy of the Americas
Jubilee Montana Network
Leadership Conference of Women Religious
Loretto Community
Loretto Earth Network
Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns
Medical Mission Sisters, North America Sector
Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate, Justice Peace/Integrity of Creation Office
National Catholic Rural Life Conference
PLANT (Partners for the Land and Agricultural Needs of Traditional Peoples)
Presentation Peace & Justice Center - Fargo, ND
The Racine Dominicans Leadership Team
School Sisters of Notre Dame Shalom North America Coordinating Committee
School Sisters of St Francis, Milwaukee, Wisconsin -- U.S. Leadership Team,
The Shalom Center
Sisters of Charity of Nazareth Congregational Leadership
Sisters of Charity of Nazareth, Western Province
Sisters of Mercy of the Americas Institute Justice Team
Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur Justice and Peace Network
Sisters of Providence of Holyoke, MA
Sisters of St. Francis of Dubuque, Iowa, leadership team
The Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia Advocacy for Justice and Peace Committee
Sisters of St. Francis of Savannah, MO
Sisters of St. Francis, Rochester, Minnesota
Sisters of St. Joseph of Springfield MA
Sisters of the Divine Compassion
Sisters of the Holy Cross - Congregation Justice Committee Notre Dame, IN
Sisters of the Most Precious Blood of O'Fallon, MO Leadership Team
Sisters of the Presentation, Dubuque Leadership Team
Unitarian Universalist United Nations Office - UUUNO

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