

Dear members of the Environment Committee:

I write to strongly support H.B. 5363, which would establish a carbon price for fossil fuels sold in Connecticut. My observations in support of this position follow.

I am going to dispense with any attempt to convince you that climate change is real, is a threat to humanity, and is principally caused by human emissions of CO₂. As you must be aware, the principal way in which projections by climate scientists have been incorrect is that they have been too conservative. We are seeing impacts sooner and larger than expected.

In the absence of national leadership to address this threat, it is incumbent upon the states to make an effort to curb carbon emissions. I want my state to exhibit strong leadership in this area. It is not guaranteed that such efforts will curtail carbon emissions sufficiently, and in a sufficiently timely manner, to enable us to avoid impacts that will prove disastrous for our economy. But every day we wait is a guarantee that the eventual impacts will be worse. IF NOT NOW, WHEN?

There is also not a guarantee that other states in our region will follow our lead. But exhibiting leadership is never certain to result in others following. What is certain is that, if leaders do not stand up, more time will be lost.

I am sorry to say that, as a resident of Senate District 13, I have a senator, Len Suzio, who is attempting to motivate his constituents to lobby against pricing carbon. You can see his plea at the link below. Instead of addressing directly the reasons one might want to tax carbon, he has addressed all the fears that one might reasonably have about the economic impacts of such a tax. That is a dereliction of a politician's obligation to inform himself about the issues and to then offer balanced guidance to his constituents:

<http://ctsenaterepublicans.com/2018/03/now-they-want-a-carbon-tax-in-ct-really-2/#.WqhZ1maZPOQ>

Permit me to copy in a definition of demagoguery here:

Demagoguery is an appeal to people that plays on their emotions and prejudices rather than on their rational side.

In fact, there are reasons to EMBRACE a carbon tax rather than to fear it. I will cite two of them.

1) I spend a lot of time working with young adults. Of course they want and need employment. But they also are looking for something to believe in. They are looking to their elders for leadership. As they choose places to settle, the most mobile of them will move to places that are looking to the future. They understand that the threat of climate change was imposed upon them by their elders, and they expect leadership to be exhibited to establish a liveable future for them.

2) It is very easy to believe that a carbon tax is going to be a universally negative impact on the economy. But that is not necessarily the case. I read a lot of economic literature, the most advanced of which is attempting to couple our physical conditions with our money economy. Here are some surprises that a preprint of an as-yet unpublished article by a leading thinker reports:

In other words, the negative economic impacts assumed by many are by no means guaranteed to materialize.

I would be very happy to discuss these issues further with you.

Sincerely,

Brian Stewart
Professor of Physics
Wesleyan University