

California Climate Breakthrough Initiative



This is our call to greatness. Join us. Climate change is a humanitarian crisis and a global security issue.

Thirty years from now, the only thing that will appear important about this historical moment will be the question of whether or not we did something meaningful to stop climate change. The reason is simple: We are drastically altering the very life support system upon which we depend, and we have only a very narrow window of opportunity to avert catastrophic impacts to society. The time for action is now; each year we delay the required emission cuts become steeper. Yet, non-binding international climate agreements continue to allow global greenhouse gas levels to soar. For a chance to stay under the international consensus 2°C temperature ceiling (assuming 2014 to be the peak year for emissions), global emissions must be reduced by some 5%+ per year for the most developed countries. The US must lead the global transition – given our historical contribution to the problem and our capacity to innovate and remediate.

Putting a Price on Carbon

A national carbon policy is needed in the US to drive a broad reduction of emissions. However, pressuring the fossil fuel-controlled Congress right now is futile. Moreover, most of the public is uninformed and unmotivated about climate issues.

Achieving a carbon price quickly will require a multi-faceted campaign that includes: (1) a compelling public warning campaign; (2) an educational initiative;

(3) a major grassroots mobilization; and, (4) a political campaign.

The effort is conceived with similar resources, scale, and time frame as a presidential race, to persuade and activate a large segment of citizens within two or three years.

The basis for this approach is that progress in the US has almost always involved grassroots mobilization. For example, in 1970 we catalyzed dramatic change after the first Earth Day, when one in ten Americans hit the streets, calling for reforms. An entire suite of green policies was enacted as a result.

Time Is Running Out

By 2011 the world had already emitted 531 gigatons of carbon (GtC). This is about two-thirds of the total we can emit for a 66% chance of staying within the 2°C heat limit, according to the most recent (2013) IPCC assessment. This leaves only another 270 GtC we can emit before we exceed our total “carbon budget” of 800 GtC.*

If global carbon emissions continue to grow at 2% each year, as they have over the last decade, we will blow through the 800 GtC carbon budget by 2032 – in just eighteen years.

* A budget of 800 GtC includes all other GHG emissions, in addition to CO₂.

The Challenge: Mobilize Influencers & Address Causes, Not Symptoms

The 2007 study “Design to Win,” (DW) initiated a major climate effort led by a consortium of foundations. DW’s main strategy was to prevent new emissions sources from being “locked in.” Foremost goals included achieving a US carbon price and stopping the construction of new coal plants. Six years into the project, the effort clearly missed its core objectives. Global emissions are still soaring and many new coal plants are planned, especially in China and India. In the US, instead of a carbon price and climate leadership for the world, we have near-silence on global warming and public apathy.

Philanthropy—composed of major foundations and private philanthropists—must now work together and play a constructive and decisive role in combating climate change. We must now pursue a strategy that addresses root causes rather than symptoms—to catalyze action and policy change by alerting and engaging society on a massive scale. Initial funding for the kind of

large-scale coordinated effort outlined in our larger plan could come from donors participating in the Climate Giving Pledge (please see accompanying document).

Catalyzing Action: It’s Time for Paul Revere to Ride Again

The subtle, gradual nature of climate change does not readily evoke urgency; so the motivation for citizen action must be socially constructed. Unfortunately the opposite—doubt—has been carefully sown by well-funded climate skeptics who created the illusion that the science is unsettled. Misinformation is endemic; our culture is failing to grasp the gravity of the climate threats. Concern is growing, but it remains shallow.

It is time to initiate an open, truthful national discussion about our situation. Citizens must come to grasp that our carbon addiction is a clear and present threat to all of us. Philanthropy is the cultural agent to fulfill a “Paul Revere” role in shifting the public dialogue through an extensive media warning campaign.

Yet a media campaign is just a necessary first step. Face-to-face dialogue, support, and education will be necessary for engaging the public. It is through our associations with others that humans develop understanding and emotional response to a crisis. Research shows that a majority of Americans can see that they are uninformed about the climate crisis. They want to know more and many would welcome a national climate education program. Only philanthropy is in a position to fund such an educational initiative that offers classes locally across the nation, with personal teaching and group discussion.

The climate activist movement itself must also be provided with support and resources to better reach the culture. Currently much of the movement is aimed at local resistance to fossil fuel extraction projects. However, it must become focused on effective policies and strategies that actually address the scope, scale, and urgency of the climate crisis. Four Principles for Climate Stabilization could serve as a guideline for the movement’s policy goals, strategies, and tactics: (1) reduce CO₂ levels quickly to stay under 2°C, (2) establish a rising carbon price, (3) leave most fossil fuels buried, and (4) establish climate justice.

*“When
the people lead,
the leaders
will follow.”*
– Mahatma Gandhi

The movement must now win a critical number of motivated citizens who can demand carbon legislation. A small minority of citizens—even a small percentage—can catalyze change if they are committed, strategic,

and organized. A comprehensive, effective campaign must include local-national coordination, as well as education, direct action, and outreach in order to grow the movement and achieve a national carbon fee policy. As the movement expands, voters can defeat anti-climate Congress members, and can become as consequential as voters were following the first Earth Day (see box on page 4).

The Bay Area & California Must Lead

The effort to transform our carbon-intensive system can only succeed when funded by billions of philanthropic dollars and must be on the scale of a presidential campaign. The question of where such a transition can take root is a difficult one, due to the political, financial, and technical challenges. Fortunately, the Bay Area has been unwavering in its commitment to address the issue of climate change; the region has the resources and talent to help cut through the cultural inertia and powerful forces that seek to keep us addicted to fossil fuels and engage the public in the type of campaign required to transform our fossil energy-intensive system.

emissions. CCBI can engage the public, bring urgent awareness and deliver the full policy array needed to avert the crisis. We are different from others in our independence, agility, engagement of key leaders and our focus on the needed alignment, clear communications, and cultural conversation required to help enable the large-scale, socially transformative solution to the crisis that should be the focus of the Paris 2015 United Conference of Parties to the Framework Convention on Climate Change. Crucially, we have committed partners who worked to successfully defeat Proposition 23 in California as well those who have conducted a successful nationwide grassroots campaign, which achieved breakthrough environmental legislation at a massive scale.

CCBI Approach

- **Model:** Create alignment and leverage resources to accelerate action to reduce carbon emissions.
- **Value-add:** Leverage wealthy, philanthropic and private sector reach for rapid scalable action.
- **Bias toward action:** Emphasis on near-term action, rather than on longer-term studies and planning.
- **Scalable:** CCBI will focus on leveraging the resources needed for action at the scale required.
- **Expansion:** CCBI will start in the Bay Area and link with others in the western and eastern US.
- **Timeframe:** Actions must have near-term and massive impact on carbon emissions (within 2-3 years).

Strategy

- **Mobilize Influencers:** Engage support and resources from key leaders in CA and beyond.
- **Engage Bay Area Philanthropy:** Engage major Bay Area foundations as part of the consortium of large philanthropies needed to provide unprecedented leadership, financial and program management.
- **Coordinate Media Efforts:** Help to create a broad-spectrum media campaign, leveraging experts in California. The media campaign, similar in reach to a presidential campaign, will focus on the US and Canada.
- **Coordinate Education Efforts:** Help inform the public about the looming climate crisis, and what actions are needed across the country, starting with the Bay Area's civic and faith-community infrastructure.

Successful California Leadership



California's No on 23 campaign models powerful potential for a national grassroots climate victory. Diverse coalitions organized a massive voter outreach and won by a broad margin.

CCBI Overview

The California Climate Breakthrough Initiative (CCBI) is an independent, nonpartisan 501c3 organization focused on alerting key influencers and decision-makers about the perils of the current status quo path and engaging them in an effort to put a price on carbon in the US, as part of a broader campaign to reduce global

- **Coordinate Grassroots Action:** Help coordinate a campaign of public outreach and engagement, involving a network of grassroots groups starting in the Bay Area and reaching across the US and Canada.
- **Coordinate Political Engagement:** Engage with those helping to lead a political campaign focused on putting a price on carbon, removing fossil fuel subsidies, providing more funding for clean and efficient energy (supply side), developing new efficiency standards (demand side), and related synergistic policy enactments.



ceiling. Many additional measures for transitioning to a non-carbon economy are required, and many will require citizen pressure and involvement. Addressing climate change is an opportunity to renew society's commitment to democratic principles and structures.

Philanthropy is key to supporting the process of climate stabilization, and the revitalization of our democracy. It is uniquely positioned to help support society in addressing the immediate challenges, in cultivating values that uphold the common good, and in building a different world that runs on the direct power of the sun.

Follow Through & Conclusion

Achieving the carbon price will be a major milestone, but it is just a step towards staying under the 2°C heat

How Can Massive Cultural & Policy Change Happen? 1970 Earth Day Organizer Denis Hayes Interview (excerpt)

Rumpus: In the three or four years following the first Earth Day in 1970, there was a tsunami of new environmental laws in America. They governed clean air, clean water, endangered species, toxic substances, pesticides, marine mammals, and what-have-you. The EPA was created, along with the Council on Environmental Quality and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. How did all that happen?



Denis Hayes, Earth Day 1970

Denis Hayes: Politicians had always viewed environmental issues as narrow things of no great political consequence. Sort of NIMBY issues. A big part of the reason was that the groups that cared about wilderness didn't talk with the groups that were trying to stop freeways from cutting through inner cities, and neither of them talked to the folks who wanted to stop the military from dumping Agent Orange on Vietnam. Earth Day gathered up those strands, and dozens more, and knitted them together in the public consciousness as "environmental" issues. The nation was pretty startled when 20 million people hit the streets. Congress, which had adjourned for the day to go back to its districts, was blown away.

Then that fall, we targeted twelve members of Congress with terrible environmental records as the Dirty Dozen. We defeated seven of them, including a hugely powerful guy—the chair of the House Public Works Committee. The Pork Committee. When we took down George Fallon, it was clear that Earth Day was not just a walk in the park. Congress began taking us very seriously.

We built some unconventional coalitions. A charter member of the Coalition for Clean Air was Walter Reuther, the visionary president of the United Auto Workers, the nation's largest union. Walter's presence at our first press conference utterly changed the dynamics of the coverage—we had instant credibility. And we didn't limit ourselves to environmental arguments. When we defeated the Supersonic Transport, we rounded up prestigious economists who testified that it would be disastrous for the nation's balance-of-payments.

We were young and idealistic and unschooled in the ways of Washington, and a lot of power brokers underestimated us until we ate their lunch. It can be a huge advantage to be underestimated. We had a great run. The laws passed between 1970 and 1974 fundamentally changed the way America does business.



Contact:
Mike Mielke, CCBI Executive Director
202.607.1064 | mmielke@ccbi.me
www.climate-breakthrough.org
CCBI is a project of the Silicon Valley Leadership Group Foundation



In partnership with:
Association for the
Tree of Life
saveourselvesnow.net

© 2014
Mike Mielke
Jean Arnold
Michael Mielke

Photo credits: Cover: Top: NASA. Left to right: Sarah Bernard, CA Dept of Water Resources, Takver, Kati Fleming, Page 3: Communities United Against Dirty Energy Prop 23, Page 4: Top: 350.org, Lower: Bullitt Foundation