

Climate Giving Pledge

A project of the **California Climate Breakthrough Initiative**



“What is the point of sitting on this vast sum in a world irredeemably on course for a 6°C temperature rise and beyond? ... How would [philanthropists] answer if their children were to ask in 2025, say, in a world staring down the barrel of a runaway greenhouse effect, why they had not thrown their hundreds of billions into the fight when there was still a chance?”

—Jeremy Leggett, founder and chairman, Solarcentury, founder and chairman of SolarAid and chairman of the Carbon Tracker Initiative, from *“The Energy of Nations”*

Context for Urgent Action

Thirty years from now, the only thing that will appear important about this historical moment is the question of whether or not we did anything meaningful to stop climate change.¹ 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 because 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.²

The time to act—at scale—is now. By 2011 the world had already emitted 531 gigatons (billion tons) of carbon (GtC). This is about two-thirds of the total we can emit to have a 66% chance of staying within the 2°C heat limit, according to the 2013 IPCC assessment. This leaves only another 270 GtC we can emit before we exceed the total “carbon budget” of 800 GtC (this includes all GHG emissions). If global carbon emissions continue to grow at 2% each year, as they have done over the last decade, we will blow through the 800 GtC carbon budget at the start of 2032 – a mere eighteen years from now.

The US must lead the global transition—given our historical contribution to the problem and our capacity to innovate and remediate. A national carbon price would be the major US policy needed to drive a broad reduction of emissions. Achieving this legislation within two or three years will require a massive nation-wide climate stabilization campaign that warns, educates, and involves the public in demanding a livable future. Indeed, change must begin with the public.

Climate Change: A Humanitarian Crisis and Global Security Issue—Not “An Environmental Issue”

Climate change is a humanitarian crisis and a global security issue. Environmentalism is broadly defined as protection and restoration of the natural, non-human world. Climate change is an enormous threat to the non-human world, and the largest and most complex threat that humanity and civilization have ever faced. As we begin to experience heat waves, prolonged droughts, rising seas, and as natural systems begin to crash, we will witness horrible effects ripple through our interconnected world.

When understood this way, it is clear that climate change will directly impact public health, poverty, economics, national security, and food and water security. Environmentalism is seen as a small special interest, within a spectrum of other special interests. Climate change transcends environmentalism.

In order to secure enough funding and to mobilize our culture for climate action, climate change must be understood as the overarching crisis and determining issue of our times. The culture must awaken to the fact that our very existence is at stake.

Yet our culture—including our leaders, media and foundations—continue to frame climate chaos as only an environmental issue. Public policy inaction and paralysis are the result.

1 Everything else – the financial crisis, the social networking revolution, how to build bridges between the West and Islam, China’s democratization – pales in significance beside the question of whether we managed to stop our climate from radically changing.

2 We are currently at a global CO2 level of ~395 ppm (the highest in 3 million years): <http://co2now.org/current-co2/co2-now/>; rising 2-4% per year: http://www.esrl.noaa.gov/gmd/ccgg/trends/mlo.html#mlo_growth. Note this does not account for additive CO2e concentrations: <http://oceans.mit.edu/featured-stories/5-questions-mits-ron-prinn-400-ppm-threshold>.

The Critical Role of Philanthropy

Such an initiative would require billions of dollars on the scale of a presidential campaign, yet current climate giving is only a tiny sliver of whole charitable pie (see Box 2). Moreover, very little currently goes toward educating and organizing the public, which will be required to avert disaster in time. Philanthropy—composed of major foundations and private philanthropists—must work together and play a decisive role in combating climate change. We must now pursue a strategy that address root causes rather than symptoms—to catalyze action and policy change by alerting and engaging society on a large scale.

A surge in response to The Giving Pledge demonstrates that donors with considerable resources are willing to step forward for humanity's good. The generosity encouraged by The Giving Pledge has even functioned as a positive cultural meme.

In light of our dire situation and the current underfunding of climate efforts, philanthropists could be motivated to support a campaign to secure a price on carbon—especially when they understand that civilization and humanity are at stake and that immediate and effective action is now required. A Climate Giving Pledge would encourage and facilitate such giving, in which all or a portion of undesignated Giving Pledge monies are directed to the Climate Giving Pledge.

The Climate Giving Pledge

Please help establish and announce the Climate Giving Pledge, and help engage other high net worth individuals in the Pledge. Your support will be critical for the success of a broad-scale climate stabilization campaign. Details on the Climate Giving Pledge:

- Donors specifically pledge to fund a culture-wide climate campaign in the US and Canada.
- Monies would likely be pooled by two key foundations based on the east and west coasts.
- Crossover from The Giving Pledge is suggested.
- Donors are encouraged to pledge a significant part of their Philanthropic resources.
- Billionaire status is not required.
- The funds are required now, not to be willed later.
- One or two spokespeople are being sought now to pledge challenge funds up to \$1 billion total, to incentivize other donors.



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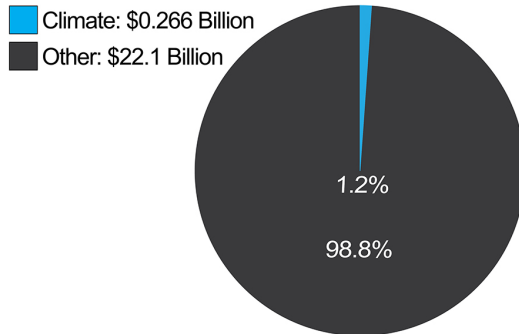


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2012 Foundation Center Grant Sample: Climate Change %

All grants of \$10,000 or more in a 2012 sample of larger 1,000 US private and community foundations. Only 1.2% was directed towards climate change —\$265.9 million out of \$22.4 billion total for all categories.³



³ Based on all grants of \$10,000 or more awarded by a national sample of the top 1,000 U.S. foundations by total giving. For community foundations, only discretionary grants are included. Grants to individuals are not included in the file.

The Giving Pledge

Warren Buffett, Bill Gates, and Melinda Gates launched The Giving Pledge in 2010. They have been enormously persuasive and compelling in recruiting other billionaires to step forward and pledge hundreds of billions of dollars. The Climate Giving Pledge would likewise benefit enormously by having one to three prominent spokespeople as role models and recruiters. The Giving Pledge:

- By design, it moves Philanthropists to step forward and give freely.
- Represents total giving by 122 donors of over half a trillion dollars.
- Does not support any particular cause.
- No pooling of money.
- Has just two requirements: (1) billionaire status, (2) pledging over half their wealth in their lifetimes or included in their wills.