



National Climate Teach-In Program: Igniting the Climate Movement and Catalyzing Climate Stabilization

A project of the California Climate Breakthrough Initiative

Humanity has only a very narrow window of opportunity to avert catastrophic climate impacts. What is needed is effective and focused climate action to bring about the rapid adoption of policies that will drive wide and deep emissions reductions.

In the United States, we need a pervasive national conversation in 2015 about climate stability,¹ and the related necessity of phasing-out fossil fuels and transitioning to renewable energy. The best way to quickly ignite action is through teach-ins—to inform and mobilize a critical mass of citizens that then demands necessary policy changes.

Teach-ins are practical, participatory, empowering, and action-oriented. They are a historically proven tactic for personally engaging people and igniting large-scale movements. History reveals that a small percent of motivated, aligned citizens (3.5%) can quickly catalyze societal change.³

About CCBI

CCBI is a nonpartisan effort focused on educating, aligning and engaging key influencers and decision-makers about the need to quickly reduce US carbon emissions. CCBI will engage influencers to call for and support this effort, while CCBI's partners will provide the administrative and implementation support for the teach-ins.

National Climate Teach-In Program

The program's goals are to inform the public, transform the national conversation, and galvanize millions of citizens to action. A key policy result is a national price on carbon. The teach-ins are part of a larger organizing effort—within a multi-faceted campaign that includes media saturation, community-based workshops, grassroots mobilization, and a political campaign.⁴ These efforts will work synergistically in building a broad-based climate movement and action campaign. climate movement that will demand action to address the catastrophic threat of climate disruption and help keep us below the 2°C/3.6°F heat ceiling.

Transformation Following the First Earth Day²

The first Earth Day in 1970 brought out one in ten Americans to call for reforms. Roughly 1,500 colleges and 10,000 schools organized teach-ins. Tens of thousands of volunteers organized local events such as parades, demonstrations, and protests.

In the November election that same year, a “Dirty Dozen” in Congress with poor environmental records was targeted. Seven of the twelve were voted out, including the powerful Chairman of the House Public Works Committee, George Fallon. Despite furious opposition from special interests, the Senate version of the 1970 Clean Air Act passed unanimously. The House later adopted it on a voice vote. Later that same year, the Environmental Protection Agency was created.

What had been considered politically impossible was quickly achieved, due to the dramatic shift in public sentiment. Republicans and Democrats together passed a portfolio of landmark environmental policies during the Republican administrations of Richard Nixon and Gerald Ford.

With a \$6 Million grant, CCBI and its partners will “seed” thousands of teach-ins and dialogues across the US—in our universities, civic spaces, and houses of worship. Teach-ins will occur from early 2015 up to the December 2015 UN Paris COP 21 meeting. Universities and other hosts will provide access to a series of speakers, films, dialogues, and organizing. National, local, and university climate organizations can partner by promoting the teach-ins within their networks.⁵

1 We must stabilize the climate within the 2°C/3.6°F heat ceiling, agreed to at the 2009 UN Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen by 141 nations, to avert the most lethal effects of climate change. We are currently on a pathway to hit and exceed that heat ceiling in less than 20 years.

2 For more about the first Earth Day, see: “The Genius of Earth Day: How a 1970 Teach-In Unexpectedly Made the First Green Generation,” Adam Rome, 2014, Hill and Wang, <http://tinyurl.com/GeniusEarthDay>, and Adam Rome, “Next Move on Climate Change—Lessons from the First Earth Day,” Huffington Post, Sept. 24, 2014, tinyurl.com/LessonsEarthDay. Teach-ins were also important for helping mobilize the anti-war movement of the Vietnam War era.

3 David Kerrigan, “11 Million Americans Can Save the Climate,” Truthout, January 30, 2014, <http://tinyurl.com/11MillionAmericans>

4 For more about this larger effort, see: “Frequently Asked Questions,” California Climate Breakthrough Initiative, <http://www.ccbi.works/faqs>

5 Possible university organizations include: American College & University Presidents’ Climate Commitment and SEED Center.

Funding, Tools, and Resources Provided

Teach-ins are most effective as a locally led “bottom-up” process, with organizers that regionalize the content and enlist the right presenters. To receive funding, grantees fill out a simple application. They must have reputable sponsors and partner with public institutions that will host the events. Materials and technical assistance will also be available. For example, a CCBI webpage offers organizing tips for handling logistics such as location, speakers, and publicity.⁶ Additionally, an online curriculum resource center, supported by leading experts, will guide and assist organizers in explaining such key issues as:

- Striking tangible examples that convey the scope, scale and urgency of the crisis.
- Several other fossil fuel-related crises, providing further motivation for the phase-out.
- The fossil-fuel reduction pathway that can reliably hold warming to the 2°C/3.6°F heat ceiling.
- Clean energy sources that provide good jobs and leads to a more livable future.
- Why individual action is insufficient, what policy enactments are required, and by when.
- International goals, deadlines, and allocations of responsibilities between nations.
- Information not widely known about climate change, even among climate activists.
- Effective options for collective action to achieve the needed policies and agreements.

Crucial Time Frame and Results

The UN Climate Change Conference, COP 21, in December 2015,⁷ is the deadline⁸ for a legally binding, universal climate agreement. This is our best chance to get it right. The teach-ins will help move the US to assume its natural role: leadership in assuring climate stabilization—since leadership and meaningful national policy won’t happen until public sentiment demands it. The results of CCBI’s National Climate Teach-in Program will be a breakthrough in galvanizing the attention of the public and action from crucial groups, in order to leverage effective policy.



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⁶ “Teach-In Organizing,” California Climate Breakthrough Initiative, http://www.ccbi.works/teach_in_organizing.

⁷ “2015 United Nations Climate Change Conference,” Wikipedia, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2015_United_Nations_Climate_Change_Conference.

⁸ The 2012 UN Climate Change Conference agreed to extend the life of the Kyoto Protocol until 2020, and determined that a successor universal climate agreement will be adopted by 2015 and implemented by 2020. “2012 United Nations Climate Change Conference,” Wikipedia, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2012_United_Nations_Climate_Change_Conference

APPENDIX I: Context and Current Theories for US Climate Action

Context

Humankind is 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. The US must lead the global transition—given our historical contribution and our capacity to innovate and remediate. Climate stabilization under the international consensus 2° Celsius (3.6° Fahrenheit) threshold is the ultimate and necessary goal.

To stay below 2°C, we need to start reducing emissions year on year, beginning 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).

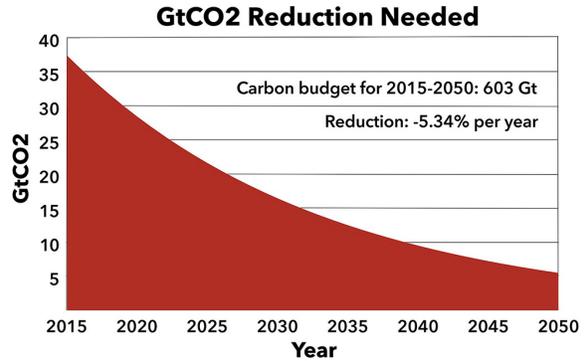


Figure 2: CO2 emissions reductions of 5% per year on average are now needed for the likelihood of staying below the 2°C heat ceiling.

Blowing the Carbon Budget

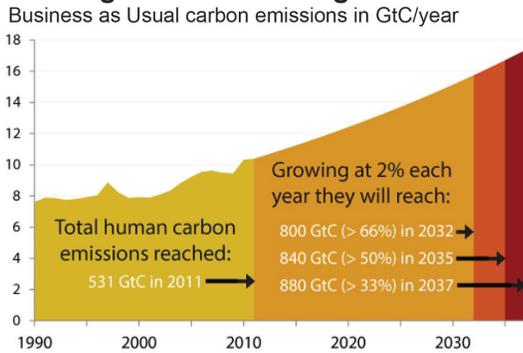


Figure 1: Under business as usual with an emissions growth of 2% per year, we would exceed our carbon budget and the 2°C ceiling by 2032, in just eighteen years, which would be unprecedented in recorded history and very dangerous.

Note: % in parentheses are the chances of limiting warming to 2°C. Assumes limited further non-CO2 forcings as per RPC 2.6. Data: Historical: Global Carbon Project. Budget: IPCC WGI AR5. Source: www.shrinkthatfootprint.com

A price on carbon is the major US policy needed to drive a broad reduction of emissions. Achieving this carbon price quickly will require a multi-faceted 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.

There are currently a number of "plausible scenarios" that many believe may help lead to federal action to price carbon. Those scenarios include:

- **Glorious mess:** New EPA regulations will lead to industry calling for a consistent, federal solution across the US as opposed to states heading in different directions.
- **Tax overhaul:** A carbon tax as part of a tax overhaul by Congress.
- **Coal loses ground; clean energy builds support:** Momentum from the EPA regs will lead to the phase-out of coal in key swing states, which creates the possibility of more support.
- **Grassroots momentum:** Various gains, such as divestiture or the turnout for the People's Climate March, will lead to eventual victory in Congress on a carbon price.
- **2016 presidential campaign:** A candidate(s) will embrace climate change as a central part of their platform, with the winner enacting their agenda.

None of these approaches engage the public broadly or focus people meaningfully enough on the underlying issue and the necessary near-term goal, in order to affect the kind of policy change needed at the federal level. What's more, none focuses on the carbon math (see above). To put it bluntly: We have a very short timeframe to address our carbon addiction. To stay below 2°C, we need to start reducing emissions year on year, beginning now. Even the current grassroots momentum is too fractured and focused on marginal gains, without clearly explaining what is fully at stake and the needed scope, scale, and urgency of large-scale action.

APPENDIX II: The Challenge - Mobilize and Align Influencers to Address Causes, Not Symptoms

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 transformation can take root is a difficult one, not least due to the political, financial, and technical challenges. Fortunately, California has been leading on climate change for some time and unwavering in its commitment to address the issue. It has the resources and talent to help cut through the cultural inertia and powerful forces that keep us wedded to fossil fuels.

While many actors are addressing climate change in their own way, they are not aligned, nor are they acting at the scale and scope required to avert catastrophic climate change. After the failure in 2010 to put a price on carbon at the federal level, no one has stepped forward to try and engage the culture in the type of conversation required to build support for efforts to avert catastrophic climate change. Put simply: We are overdue for a breakthrough.

The subtle, gradual nature of climate change does not readily evoke urgency; so the motivation for action must be socially constructed. Unfortunately the opposite—doubt—has been carefully sown by climate skeptics who say that the science is unsettled. Misinformation is endemic; our culture is failing to grasp the gravity of the threat. 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 we are under clear and present threat with the status quo. 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 an opportunity to become educated.

Catalyzing Action: CA Climate Breakthrough Initiative (CCBI)

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 emissions. CCBI can engage the public, bringing urgent awareness to the issue.¹ We are unique in our independence, agility, engagement of key leaders, and our focus on the needed alignment, clear communications, and cultural conversation required to help enable a large-scale, socially transformative solution to the climate crisis. Crucially, we have committed partners who have conducted a successful nationwide grassroots campaign, which achieved breakthrough legislation at a massive scale.²

Mission

CCBI focuses on educating, aligning, and engaging key organizations, influencers, decision-makers and philanthropy regarding the perils of the current

status quo path and the need to take action at scale in order to avert the worst effects of climate change.

Vision and Purpose

- **Vision:** CCBI's vision is of the global community prospering in a low-carbon economy.
- **Purpose:** CCBI will educate and engage the public in a campaign to significantly reduce global warming pollution before it is too late to avoid the most catastrophic climate effects.

CCBI Approach and Focus

- **Model:** Create alignment and leverage resources to accelerate action.
- **Value-add:** Leverage philanthropic, policy, NGO and private sector reach.
- **Bias toward action:** Emphasis on near-term action over longer-term studies and planning.
- **Scalable:** Focus on leveraging the resources needed for action at scale required.
- **Expansion:** CCBI will start in the Bay Area and link with others across the US
- **Timeframe:** Actions must have near-term and massive impact on CO2 emissions (2-3 years)
- **Mobilize Influencers:** Engage support from key leaders in various sectors.
- **Engage Philanthropy:** To provide unprecedented leadership, financial and program management.

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.
- **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, increasing funding for clean and efficient energy (supply side), developing new efficiency standards (demand side), and related synergistic policy enactments.

¹ It is understood that the problem must be clearly explained and the public must be awakened and engaged before any shift is possible.

² We would be pleased to provide details of this national legislation and policy transformation.

Theory of Change

“As leaders we have a responsibility to fully articulate the risks our people face. If the politics are not favorable to speaking truthfully, then clearly we must devote more energy to changing the politics.”

– Marlene Moses, Ambassador to the United Nations for Nauru, 2012

The public is the single most powerful force for creating the needed change. Sustained citizen focus, engagement, and action can force the Congress—even a Republican Congress—to put a price on carbon to benefit people and the planet. As Abraham Lincoln said, “With public sentiment, nothing can fail. Without it, nothing can succeed.” Research shows that just 3.5% of the population—activated, organized, trained, and mobilized—can transform the culture and the political system.³

Further, CCBI operates from the premise that in essence, philanthropy itself must become a “Paul Revere” voice in warning the public. Philanthropy alone is the cultural leader with the credibility, influence, and resources to fulfill this role. To achieve the emissions reductions needed to stay below 2°C, it is important to build and coordinate action between a grass-roots movement that is focused on a clear and meaningful goal, and a broadly representative grass-tops coalition that can and will lead.

- **Grass-roots movement:** The grassroots is insufficiently engaged on the single most important issue—pricing carbon now.
- **Grass-tops leadership:** The public looks to leadership for guidance and signals. Thus far the leadership response has been weak, uncoordinated and insufficiently clear about what is at stake and what is needed.

Building a Movement and Winning a Campaign

What is needed is a campaign to end the stranglehold of fossil fuels on our culture, economy, and way of life. That requires an effort on the scale of a Presidential campaign.

Two current movements—Divestiture and Keystone—are often cited as means to build towards a mass movement. While both of these campaigns help educate and build public will, they must be seen for what they really are: primarily symbolic (though the Keystone is also somewhat strategic). They should be considered sub-movements within a larger overarching climate movement. Neither makes any connection towards enacting a carbon fee, phasing out fossil fuel subsidies, and investing in the transition of our infrastructure now—which are all required to stay under the 2°C ceiling. Indeed, neither campaign relates to the scope, scale, and urgency that our situation now requires.

The defeat in 2010 of the fossil-fueled effort to reverse California’s landmark climate law provides clues for achieving national climate policy. Over 61% of voters came together to defeat Proposition 23, which would have indefinitely suspended California’s Global Warming Solutions Act (AB32). Two main coalitions, involving a diverse alliance of organizations and networks, defended AB32.

- **The Grass-roots coalition, Communities United Against Dirty Energy:** This alliance of over 130 groups worked to get out the vote in ethnic communities by using door-to-door, phone outreach, mailings, concerts, rallies, and ethnic media coverage.
- **The Grass-tops coalition, Stop Dirty Energy:** This coalition united businesses, labor groups, public health groups, faith communities, large environmental NGOs, local governments and elected officials to raise the necessary money to fight the campaign, developed the strategy, and organized much of the media and political campaign.

³ See the work of Erica Chenoweth: Max Fisher, “Peaceful protest is much more effective than violence for toppling dictators,” *Washington Post*, November 5, 2013, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/worldviews/wp/2013/11/05/peaceful-protest-is-much-more-effective-than-violence-in-toppling-dictators/>. As a recent example in US history, the Tea Party changed the political landscape with active members comprising a tiny percent of the US population.