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Richard Eidlin: What's next for the U.S. after the Paris Climate Agreement?

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Well before the final negotiations of the COP21 climate talks in Paris, business was already making a big difference on the ground. For the first time, superstar entrepreneurs showed up with plans to fund major initiatives. Giant companies sent CEOs to showcase their results in reducing carbon in their own operations. And entire industries, such as financial services, agriculture and manufacturing, made new commitments to address climate change.



Attending the talks as a business leader, I could tell that positive pressure from the business sector was going to lead to success. The overwhelming message to government leaders was, "we, the international business community, will support you if you make a strong deal."

But of course talk is cheap – and easy. Now comes the difficult part: turning the agreement into actions that will actually save the planet.

Luckily, business excels at innovating and turning plans – no matter how vague – into practical, achievable results. And American businesses are arguably the best in the world at that.

First, and easiest, is for companies to make or extend individual commitments to reduce carbon. Whether by increasing their usage of renewable energy or energy efficiency, streamlining supply chains – or even steps as small as offering mass transit incentives to employees – companies large and small can take their own steps to

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cut carbon emissions.

Over and over in Paris, we heard how these efforts actually strengthen the bottom line. We saw many businesses that are committed to doing their part on climate change – like Patagonia, which has installed **nearly 500 solar panels** at its headquarters.

But as great as the voluntary efforts are, no one believes they will be enough to reach the necessary targets. For significant progress, business needs government to nudge things in the right direction.

For example, take the Clean Power Plan, the EPA's rules to reduce carbon emissions from power plants. These rules will significantly cut our greenhouse gases, which is a major benefit for every industry. The rules provide states with unprecedented leeway in crafting their own plans, which will result in technological innovation and job creation.

Unfortunately some in Congress are trying to block the rules as being bad for business. That's why during the Paris summit, our business group joined with Environmental Entrepreneurs (E2) to announce letters calling on Congress not to derail the talks and get serious about strengthening America's economy.

Most small business owners agree with us. National, scientific polling found that **64 percent** of small business owners support government regulation to cut carbon pollution from power plants.

In fact, many business people want even stronger climate policies, such as carbon pricing.

Major U.S. brands like Ben & Jerry's and Seventh Generation support putting a market price on carbon. Many more U.S. companies are signing a business letter to Congress showing support for a carbon tax. Internationally, even oil companies are getting behind the idea.

When I was in Paris, I spoke with an executive of a giant European oil company. As she explained, a carbon tax "provides us with a clearer path for making mid-term investment decisions. Whether we invest in another oil field, or move toward more wind depends in large part on what the price of CO2 will be." This is using the power of the market to determine how to power the economy going forward.

The Paris climate talks resulted in a breakthrough agreement. But it is really just the beginning. Now we all – individuals, government and businesses – need to do everything we can to turn that talk into action. For business leaders, that means not only doing what we can in our business, but it means pushing our elected officials to do what they need to. Paris proved that business support can help in making a deal. To turn that deal into reality, business support will be essential.

Richard Eidlin is Vice President of Policy and Campaigns at the American Sustainable Business Council.



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A revenue neutral carbon fee with a dividend, makes enormous sense!

Economists and scientists say it is the best solution to the threat of our carbon emissions. This way citizens would RECEIVE the carbon fees as a monthly dividend. That would cancel out any price spikes in dirty energy.


Polluters PAY the fees, so it holds fossil fuel corporations responsible for the damages they cause, hundreds of billions of dollars per year (Harvard School of Medicine). It would rapidly lower emissions, as happened in BC Canada with a similar, popular policy. BC lowered both emissions and taxes with their fees.

A study by respected Regional Economic Modeling, Inc. found the dividends would help to create 2.9 million additional jobs in 20 years, while reducing emissions much faster than regulations.
<http://citizensclimatelobby.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/REMI-National-SUMMARY.pdf>

To those who reject the science: perhaps nothing will change your mind. But what have you got against cleaner air, less asthma in our kids, fewer heart attacks, and more money (the dividend) in your pockets?

To those accepting the science: Any effort to limit the problem of climate change is worth it. For example:

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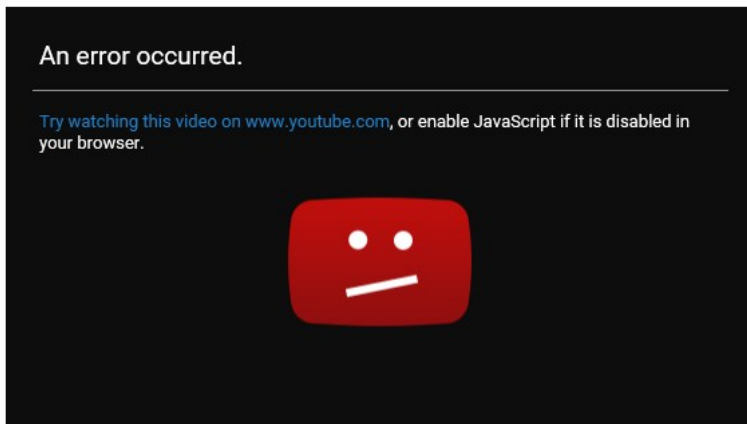
to those accepting the science. Any effort to limit the problem of climate change is worthwhile. For example, the cost of sea level rise ALONE is so great that no effort to prevent it is unwarranted. Why even bother with the paid deniers and front groups who thrive creating the delay of a false debate?

Elon Musk was asked "what can we do?" I would say whenever you have the opportunity, talk to the politicians. Ask them to enact a carbon tax. We have to fix the unpriced externality. I would talk to your friends about it and fight the propaganda from the carbon industry."

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