

# FORUM

## Addressing climate change is good for the economy



**Bill Blancato**  
Guest Columnist

We celebrated another Earth Day on April 22. In 1970, when Earth Day was established, our government acted

decisively to address the most pressing environmental issues of the day; water pollution and emission of smog, causing particulate matter into the air. Today our government is paralyzed and seems unable to tackle the worst environmental problem of our lifetimes — climate change.

This past winter was hard on the East Coast. But according to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, March 2015 and the first quarter of this year were the warmest on record. The last time the average monthly temperature was below average was February 1985. So for more than 30 years each month has been warmer than average.

In 1859, Irish scientist John Tyndall discovered that carbon dioxide is a greenhouse gas; increased amounts of it in the atmosphere trap heat, warming the earth. Since that discovery, we have burned fossil fuels and dumped CO2 in the atmosphere at a rate well beyond what nature can absorb. That CO2 will stay in the atmosphere long after we are gone, trapping heat and changing the climate.

The consequences of climate change are dire. A report issued last year by a group headed by former New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg and former President George W. Bush's Treasury Secretary Henry Paulson predicts that "by 2050 between \$66 billion and \$106 billion worth of existing coastal property will likely be below sea level nationwide, with \$238 billion to \$507 billion worth of property below sea level by 2100" and "some states in the Southeast, lower Great Plains, and Midwest risk up to a 50% to 70% loss in average annual crop yields."

Ninety-seven percent of climate scientists are convinced, based upon the evidence, that human-caused global warming is happening. In the mid-1700s, the concentration of CO2 in the atmosphere was about 280 ppm. In 1960, it was about 315 ppm. Now it is 400 ppm. All of that CO2 comes from burning fossil fuels.

We must reduce our use of fossil fuels to reduce the risks of climate change. We are often told we can't act to address climate change because doing so will hurt the economy and cost jobs. But that is not true. A revenue neutral carbon fee and dividend will substantially reduce our use of fossil fuels and CO2 emissions, will create more than 2 million jobs within 10 years and will help the economy grow.

Carbon fee and dividend works like this:

A steadily-rising fee — starting at \$15 per ton of carbon-dioxide — is placed on fossil fuels at the first point of sale, increasing by \$10 per ton of CO2 each year. Revenue from the fee is divided up

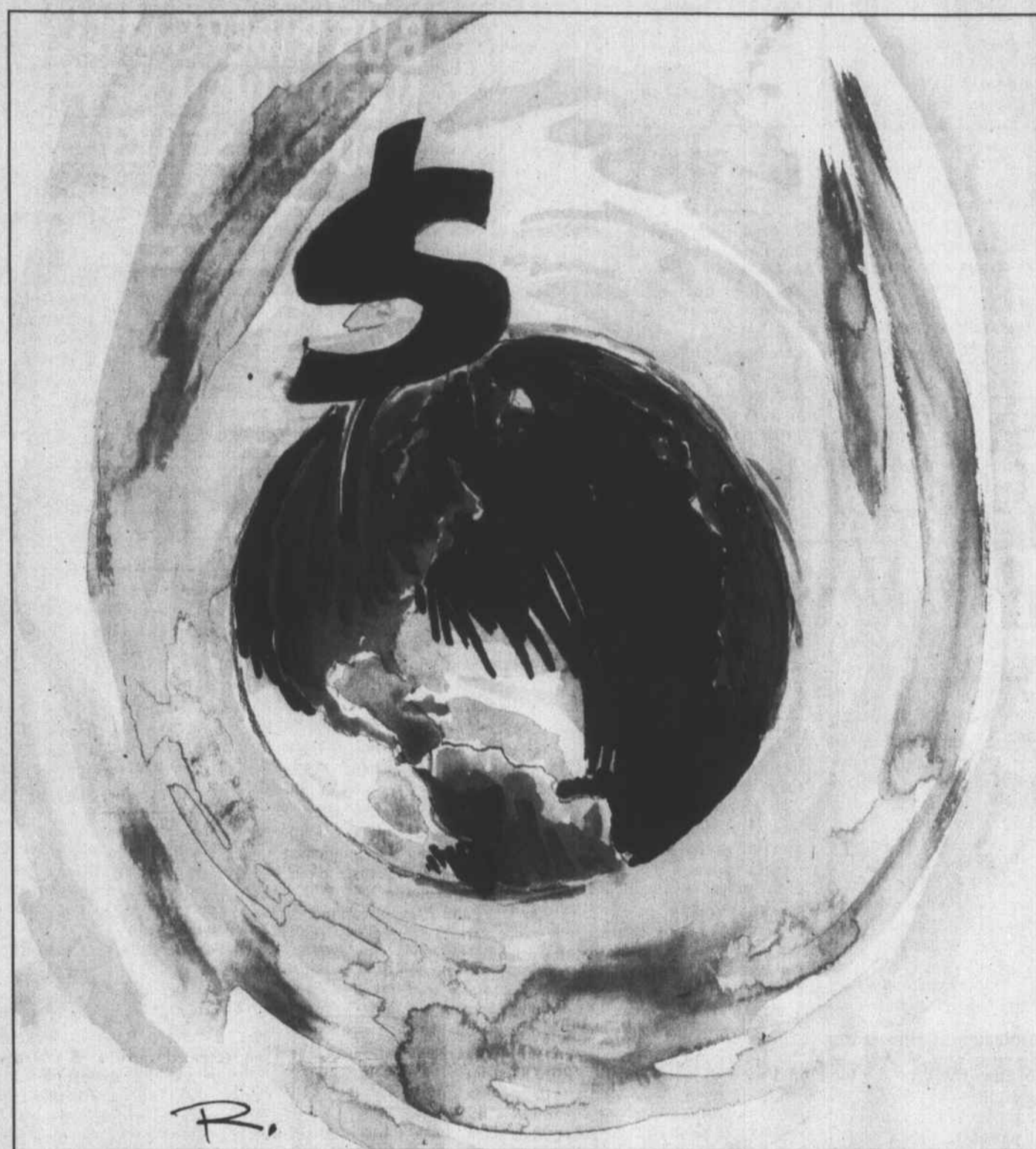


Illustration by Ron Rogers for The Chronicle

equally and returned to all households. Border adjustment tariffs are placed on imports from nations that do not have an equivalent carbon-pricing mechanism in order to maintain a level playing field for American businesses.

Regional Economic Models Inc. (REMI), a firm that corporations, governments and academic institutions turn to for economic forecasting, conducted a study on the carbon fee and dividend proposal. They found that in the first year, a four-person household would receive an annual dividend of \$600. After 10 years, the total annual dividend would be around \$3,500. This feature is critical: instead of impeding economic growth, a carbon fee will grow

the economy, create jobs, and put money in the pockets of American households. For most families, this dividend will be more than enough to cover their increased energy bills. REMI found that within a decade, a revenue neutral carbon fee and dividend system will create more than 2 million new jobs and increase GDP by about \$80 billion per year.

With carbon fee and dividend, we can transition our economy off of fossil fuels to clean and sustainable renewable energy. This will be particularly good for North Carolina's strong and growing renewable energy sector. A recent report from the North Carolina Sustainable Energy Association estimates that we have 22,995

full-time equivalent jobs in the renewable energy sector in North Carolina. This is up from 18,404 jobs a year earlier, almost a 25% increase. These are jobs in North Carolina. Unlike fossil fuels, renewable energy is created locally. Reducing our use of fossil fuels is not only good for the environment, it is also good for our economy.

Citizens' Climate Lobby is working to persuade Congress to enact a revenue neutral carbon fee and dividend. You can learn more at [citizensclimatelobby.org](http://citizensclimatelobby.org).

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## Do marches, curfews and home training matter?



**James B. Ewers Jr.**  
Guest Columnist

I can remember marching for equal rights when I was a college student in the late '60s. The marches

served as a rallying point for us as we believed that they would make a difference. I believe, rather I know, they did make a difference.

In my opinion it is what happens after the marches that is the most important. Opposition to current practices means as citizens we must make changes in laws and who administers them.

The Voting Rights Act of 1965 gave us as African-Americans the right to vote. If we do not vote, then change cannot occur. Sitting at home when it is time to vote will only weaken our positions.

Recent events in Baltimore and other cities across America highlight the power of voting. Some college students chose to participate in the marches while others did not. Yet the common thread is that every college student must exercise their right to vote.

I believe that as a result of events in Baltimore, Cleveland and New York, college students have started voter registration campaigns on their campuses. The only way to affect change is to be a change agent yourself. If you are "talking" about the change, then you must be the change. It truly is the doing of the talking. Waiting

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for progress without orchestrating the progress will be futile and will only trigger other pockets of civil discord.

The mayor of Baltimore, Stephanie Rawlings-Blake, lifted the 10 p.m. curfew that had been enforced to curb the violence in the city. Many involved in the protests were young people. Many cities in America have curfews for young students, so this was not a new strategy.

There has been much debate about whether the curfew was an effective tool. I believe in this instance that it was. Being on the streets of Baltimore at night was simply not a good idea. So instituting the curfew was a matter of safety and welfare for residents. Some took exception to the curfew, such as Tracey Hines, who works at Camden Yards, home of the Baltimore Orioles. She wore a T-shirt that said "No More Curfew".

If you are of my generation, we did not have curfews, per say. Our curfew began when the street lights came on! That was a signal to go home. All activities and talk-

ing ended at that time. Our parents didn't have to come out of the house to make any curfew announcement. If you wanted to be out with your boys on tomorrow, then you better be inside tonight.

Maybe one of the lessons learned in cities that have curfews is to create a system of parent councils. These councils could implement better practices and habits for their children.

I have said many times that there are two ships: the parent ship and the friend ship. If you want to set some guidelines and some lofty goals for children to aspire to, then welcome aboard the parent ship. However, if you want to give your children all freedom and leeway, then you will sink on the friend ship. For example, buying your child the latest name brand tennis shoe thinking that will appease him or her will lead you down the wrong road.

There are no guarantees that black boys and men won't be killed under questionable circumstances, but we as parents and grandparents must do our part to help

to prevent it.

There are more mentoring programs for young African-American males than ever. The overarching goal for each of them is to shape the futures of these young men. I applaud them because I am a part of some of them. We don't save them all, yet we save enough to keep hope alive.

Yet missing in too many of these programs is parental involvement. Parents cannot wait for someone else to teach their children "home training." There is enough data to suggest that parents are younger now. As a result, young parents having children is almost a recipe for disaster.

It may be wise and prudent to put more emphasis on teaching parents how to be parents. If we can equip new parents with the necessary skills, young boys and girls will mature into good decision-makers. Life regardless of race and gender involves making good decisions.

Summer is here and school is out. Some of our parents and children will be at a crossroads. Which ship will they be travelling on over the months to come? Will it be the parent ship or the friend ship?

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