

TO: Midwestern Greenhouse Gas Reduction Accord Advisory
Committee
FROM: Peter Bakken, Public Policy Coordinator
Wisconsin Council of Churches
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The Wisconsin Council of Churches is an association of thirteen Protestant and Christian Orthodox denominations in Wisconsin, including the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, the United Methodist Church, the Presbyterian Church (USA), the United Church of Christ, and the Episcopal Church. Together, we comprise some 3000 congregations and almost a million members, and reach every corner of this state.

We are grateful to the participating states and provinces of the Midwest Greenhouse Gas Accord for their commitment to action to mitigate climate change resulting from carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gas emissions.

We regard climate change as a moral and religious issue. Rapid and extreme climate change resulting from human consumption of fossil fuels and other activities threatens the stability of the conditions and systems that support life on Earth, and the natural beauty and integrity of God's creation.

We are especially concerned for the poor and vulnerable of this planet, those who are already living on the edge of survival. They are the most threatened by the projected consequences of climate change: sea level rise, the spread of infectious diseases, extreme heat events, and changes in precipitation patterns.

The recent torrential rains and devastating floods that we have experienced here in the Midwest are reminders of how costly and traumatic the impacts of climate-related events can be for our families, farmers, and communities. It is therefore imperative that we do all we can to prevent runaway global warming from multiplying these kinds of destructive events.

We urge you, therefore, to set targets for greenhouse gas reductions that are firmly based on what climate scientists tell us is necessary to avoid catastrophic consequences of climate change – not on what seems to be politically palatable or economically comfortable. We cannot negotiate with the laws of physics and chemistry.

The global atmosphere belongs to no one – to no state, nation, corporation, or generation. We who are alive today hold it as a common trust for all who live,

and for those who will come after us. Accordingly, we support a cap-and-trade mechanism in which 100 per cent of the carbon emission allowances are auctioned.

In the first place, it is only fair that the community be compensated for the use of its limited public resources. In the second place, the revenues from such an auction are needed to fund efforts to increase energy efficiency and the use of renewable resources. They are especially needed to make it possible for low-income people to meet their energy needs without damaging the environment or making it harder for them to meet their other vital needs such as food, clothing, shelter and health care. Investments in low-income energy assistance programs, expanded public transportation, energy-efficient affordable housing, and other initiatives can help reduce global warming while minimizing harmful economic consequences on low-income communities.

Finally, we would support the formation of an ad-hoc advisory committee to assess the impact of proposed cap and trade mechanisms on the poor. This committee, which must include persons representing the interests and viewpoints of low-income communities, would advise the Midwest Greenhouse Gas Accord process on how a cap and trade system could achieve its goals without unfairly burdening those who can least afford increased energy costs.

The Wisconsin Council of Churches applauds the courage and foresight you have shown in tackling the complex and controversial policy issues that surround global warming. We are hopeful that this process will lead to effective and equitable measures to reduce the impacts of global warming on God's good earth and on the most vulnerable of our neighbors.

Thank you for your attention to our concerns.