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Energy Issues- What is the impact?

- I. *Read and annohighlight the article—make notes as you go. Feel free to research any ideas to gather more data!*

PRO/CON: Sooner or later, U.S. must act on climate change laws

By McClatchy-Tribune News, adapted by Newsela staff

Jan. 23, 2014

PRO: Sooner would help push other countries

GREEN BAY, Wis. — In a new report, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) said that Earth's climate system is definitely getting warmer. The IPCC is a group of scientists set up by the United Nations. The report was based on information from dozens of experts. The study also found that humans have probably been the biggest cause of climate change. Our burning of oil, gas and coal is mostly to blame. When we burn those fuels it creates greenhouse gases that heat up the Earth and change our weather. But, countries can't agree to lower greenhouse gases. A big climate change meeting just ended in Poland. Not much came out of it. Yet, these gases are dangerous risks to the world's businesses, its environment and the health of all people.

Leading The Way

A big reason that little has happened is the United States. Per person, we produce more greenhouse gases than any other country. And we haven't stepped up to take the lead. Neither has China though. It has been growing quickly, building new cities and factories and putting more drivers on the road. That has pushed it to the No. 1 spot in producing greenhouse gases in total. It produces less per person than the U.S., but it has so many more people. What might the United States do to help slow global climate change and make its effects less serious? Passing a big national climate change law would be a good start. The United States hasn't been standing still on climate change. More than half of the states and more than a thousand U.S. cities have made laws. These should reduce greenhouse gases. The laws include actions to promote new fuels, such as those made from vegetables instead of oil. They're also trying to get people to use energy wisely, so it's not wasted. And get more people riding trains instead of cars. The Obama government has done a lot, too, by giving billions of dollars to develop new energy technologies that don't burn oil. <Example> Wind, and solar energy from the sun. The government also got car companies to make cars that go farther on a gallon of gas so they burn less gasoline. By 2025, cars will have to go 54.5 miles per gallon of gas that they burn.

Get The Ball Rolling

The White House is also developing rules for coal power plants. These promise to begin shifting the nation away from the use of coal, which is a dirty type of energy. Yet the new rules are not enough to fix climate change. Our whole nation has to pass a law. If it did, that might push other nations around the world to do more. A national climate change plan would send a strong signal to the world that the United States takes climate change seriously. But how likely is it that our leaders in Washington can pass a climate change law when they can barely get along? It is not likely right now. And it won't happen as long as some of our leaders don't believe in climate change. It doesn't help that many of them are friends with the oil companies which make the fuels that cause climate change. Those leaders don't want new laws. But, it is necessary that Congress try to design and pass a national climate change law – and do it soon. It needs to hold hearings, hear experts and other witnesses, review the evidence, and discuss the problem at length to build support. Congress should explore all its tools so it can find ways to appeal to all our leaders. If it needs to find ways that make businesses happy, then it should. Clearly, this will be a tough battle, but it is necessary to try.

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CON: Later would give technology a chance to develop

XIAN, China — Congress should not waste time debating a major climate change law in 2014. And it doesn't need to. We have already cut how much greenhouse gas we make by a lot, and greenhouse gases are what cause climate change. And that's without Congress doing anything at

all. We cut down on greenhouse gases because we started using more natural gas. It's cleaner than oil, gas, or coal. And since jobs and money have been tight, people are buying less and factories are producing fewer things. This means that less fuels are being burned. If Congress did jump in, they could easily mess things up.

Wait For New Technology

It's better to wait. The current plans on how to cut greenhouse gasses are all expensive. Lowering the amount of greenhouse gas released into the air will be cheaper in the future. New technology will help. Think about how much cellphones have changed over the past 20 years. Cellphones used to be the size of bricks and so expensive that only people in business could use them. But technology has improved and prices have dropped. Today, even kids carry iPhones. The phones now are far better than the old cellphones. And they are much cheaper. That same type of improvement will happen with new technology to cut greenhouse gases. It will make fixing climate change cheaper and better in the future. The United States can do little about greenhouse gases single-handedly. It will cost too much for American businesses to shoulder the expense. China and India are growing fast. They're producing more greenhouse gasses. Those extra greenhouse gasses will swamp any cuts we could make today. <Example> the Chinese own fewer cars per person than the U.S. did in 1920.> But the Chinese will eventually drive as much as us. When they do, they'll be driving more than 20 times the number of cars they are driving today. That's because they have so many more people than we do. The Chinese are using a lot more electricity too. New coal power plants are opening there all the time.

We Shouldn't Act Alone

If we cut greenhouse gases by ourselves it would be pointless. And it would make it harder to reach an agreement with developing countries like China and India. Those nations will definitely ask for cuts from the U.S. and Europe. They won't cut their own greenhouse gases without it. We shouldn't cut our greenhouse gases before an agreement is reached. If we do, we will have to make even more cuts to get China and India to sign on. A serious climate change law will touch on many areas of Americans' daily lives. Cutting greenhouse gasses is going to need huge changes in how we use energy. Energy touches every part of our lives. So, a law will take careful thought. We need to discuss it at length. We need our leaders to put out clear-cut plans, and we need to hear them debate them publicly. Then voters can then make a choice about the changes they want to see. That hasn't happened yet. Finally, leaders in Congress aren't speaking to each other much right now. So, Congress won't be able to reach agreement on a big law for a while. Also, they're running for elections in 2014. They're going to be busy running and raising money. Starting a new debate right before an election could result in a really bad law. Discussion, not speed, is what we need.

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II. Summarize the PROs OR CONs on the changes needed to combat climate change.

III. Which side do you think is right? What would you do? Give at LEAST TWO reasons for your opinion: