

WITNESS IN WASHINGTON WEEKLY

The Washington Office of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

November 2, 2009

This week's messages are-

- Countdown to Copenhagen
- New Health Care Bill Introduced - HR 3962
- Holiday Postcard Campaign for Immigration Reform
- Revelation 21:1-4 - God Is With Us, Death and Suffering Are Eliminated

Countdown to Copenhagen

The United Nations Climate Change Conference kicks off in Copenhagen on December 7th. The parties at the conference will finalize a follow-up international agreement to the Kyoto Protocol, which expires in 2012, to stabilize greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere at a level that will prevent dangerous human interference with the climate system and assist countries in adapting to the inevitable effects of climate change. The Copenhagen conference intends to provide clarity on four key issues:

- Ambitious emission reduction targets for developed countries;
- Nationally appropriate mitigation actions of developing countries;
- Scaling up financial and technological support for both adaptation and mitigation; and
- An effective institutional framework with governance structures that address the needs of developing countries.

Climate change legislation in the U.S. Congress is proceeding slowly and is unlikely to be completed before the Copenhagen conference. The House of Representatives completed its bill at the end of June. The Senate Environment and Public Works Committee held hearings last week on its climate bill, "The Clean Energy Jobs and American Power Act" [S. 1733]. The committee is expected to markup the bill in the next couple of weeks. The Senate Finance Committee also has jurisdiction over this issue and will take it up over the next several months. Senators are working among themselves to set agreements on the essentials of emission reduction targets and implementation.

As debate and negotiations continue, legislators should be reminded of the [faith community's principles on global warming](#) that call for justice, stewardship, sustainability and sufficiency in climate change legislation.

Actions

1. Urge your members of Congress to pass legislation that will:
 - Make at least an 80% cut in domestic carbon emissions by 2050.
 - Assist and help to pay for developing nations to reduce their emissions, develop cleanly, and adapt to climate change.
 - Strengthen provisions that provide relief to low-income energy consumers in the United States.
 - Provide international adaptation assistance for vulnerable populations around the world.

2. [Email](#) or call [202-456-1111] the White House and urge President Obama to attend the United Nations Climate Change Conference and to present a strong U.S. commitment to contribute its share to the reduction of carbon emissions and to the funds required to help developing nations adapt to climate change.

Sample Email

Dear President Obama:

In December 2009, world leaders will meet in Copenhagen for crucial international talks about climate change. I'd like you to be there in person to demonstrate how much we care about our global family and our willingness to do what it takes to address this challenge with compassion and resolution.

I believe everyone needs to do their part, so I will:

1. Personally evaluate my lifestyle and commit to actions that significantly reduce my carbon footprint.
2. Let Members of Congress know my views about domestic legislation needed to address climate change and to create a greener, more just economy.
3. Urge you and the U.S. negotiating team to commit, along with other industrialized countries, to:
 - Make at least an 80% cut in domestic carbon emissions by 2050.
 - Assist and help to pay for developing nations to reduce their emissions, develop cleanly, and adapt to climate change.
4. Hold you and the negotiators in my prayers and meditations as leaders meet in Copenhagen.

General Assembly Guidance

From "The Power to Change: U.S. Energy and Global Warming," passed by the 218th General Assembly (2008):

"In agreement with four prior General Assemblies (202nd, 210th, 211th, and 215th) that have called on the U.S. government to ratify the Convention on Climate Change

and the Kyoto Protocol, we ask the U.S. government to do nothing less than repent of its efforts to block consensus and to work with the international community as it develops a binding agreement to replace the Kyoto Protocol when it expires in 2012."

"The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) supports comprehensive, mandatory, and aggressive emission reductions that aim to limit the increase in Earth's temperature to 2 degrees Celsius or less from pre-industrial levels. Legislation should focus on the short-term goal of reducing U.S. greenhouse gas emissions 20 percent from 1990 levels by 2020, and 80 percent from 1990 levels by 2050."

New Health Care Bill Introduced - H.R. 3962

"The Affordable Health Care for America Act" (H.R. 3962), introduced on October 30th, is the result of negotiations among House Democrats to combine the bills passed by the Education and Labor, Energy and Commerce, and Ways and Means committees. The new bill includes a public option, ensures that the Medicaid safety-net program will become available for families with incomes below 150 percent of the federal poverty level - approximately \$33,000 in annual income for a family of four and provides needed subsidies so that health insurance premiums are affordable for working families.

H.R. 3962 takes steps forward to provide affordable, accessible health insurance for all Americans. It will:

- Forbid plans from basing premiums or denials of care on factors such as pre-existing conditions, race, or gender.
- Limit use of age rating.
- Cap out-of-pocket expenses.
- Require health plans for children to cover dental, hearing and vision care.
- Require health plans offered through the exchange system, and, eventually, employer plans, to cover preventive care at no cost to the patient.
- Close the Medicare Part D prescription drug program "donut hole."
- Provide "affordability credits" to help individuals and families who meet income requirements pay their health insurance premiums.

The House negotiators removed the Kucinich single-payer amendment from H.R. 3962. The Kucinich amendment allows individual states to create single-payer health systems if Congress fails to create a nationwide single-payer system and was included in H.R. 3200, the House Committee on Education and Labor bill.

Action

Contact your members of Congress urge them to support health care reform that includes a comprehensive public option that is available on day one and in all states. Ask them to:

- guarantee that citizens in all states have an opportunity to participate (no opt-out);
- that the public option is available on day one (no triggers),
- include more substantial mechanisms for controlling the cost of premiums,
- support Representative Kucinich's single-payer amendment to be offered as a Manager's Amendment to H.R. 3962.

General Assembly Guidance

In 2002, the General Assembly approved "Advocacy on Behalf of the Uninsured," in which it:

- Reaffirm[ed] the church's commitment to advocacy for a national medical plan.
- Encourage[d] presbyteries, sessions, and the members of congregations to be advocates for universal health care and to support advocacy efforts in their local communities to bring public and private entities together in this effort.
- Encourage[d] members of Congress to recognize the importance of universal health care - that is, equal, accessible, affordable, and high-quality health care for all persons residing in our nation.

In 2008, the 218th General Assembly:

- Endorse[d] in principle the provision of single-payer universal health care reform in which health care services are privately provided and publicly financed.
- Direct[ed] the General Assembly Council, through appropriate offices including the National Health Ministries, the Washington Office, and the Presbyterian Health, Education, and Welfare Association (PHEWA), to advocate for, educate about, and otherwise pursue the goal of obtaining legislation that enacts single-payer, universal national health insurance as the program that best responds to the moral imperative of the gospel; monitoring progress toward this goal and reporting back to the next two General Assemblies (2010 and 2012).

Holiday Postcard Campaign for Immigration Reform

The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) has called for comprehensive immigration reform through action of the 216th General Assembly and by signing on to faith initiatives which urge Congress to act.

The [Interfaith Platform on Humane Immigration Reform](#) upholds family unity as a priority of all immigration policies.

The coming holiday season, when many will spend time with their families, will be an important time to remind Members of Congress of the urgent need for immigration

reform that will help put immigrant families back together and to urge them to act soon.

Join the Holiday Postcard Campaign for Immigration Reform from October through December. Participation in the Holiday Postcard Campaign will remind Members of Congress that our broken immigration system is hurting immigrant families, and needs to be reformed *now*.

[Click here for more information on how to participate in this holiday postcard campaign.](#)

Revelation 21:1-4 - God Is With Us, Death and Suffering Are Eliminated

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "See, the home of God is among mortals. He will dwell with them; they will be his peoples, and God himself will be with them; he will wipe every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; mourning and crying and pain will be no more, for the first things have passed away.

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Thank You.

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