

Giving revenue to people can calm carbon pricing angst

Your Turn

Mark Reynolds and Steffi Rausch
Guest columnists

In their well-intentioned effort to reduce greenhouse gas emissions that cause climate change, the French government announced it would increase fuel taxes to discourage driving and encourage low-carbon transportation. It did not go over well.

Violent demonstrations erupted in the streets of Paris and other French cities, forcing the government to delay for at least six months the tax hike. The protests raise concerns about public backlash against fuel taxes specifically and carbon pricing in general, and that's a huge concern. According to nearly all economists, putting an effective price on carbon is the most effective tool for reducing the heat-trapping emissions that will inevitably cook our goose in a business-as-usual scenario. If nations feel they need to set that tool aside, the world has little to no chance of meeting the emissions reduction targets necessary to avoid the worst consequences of climate change.

Fortunately, there is a solution that can calm people's fears about the financial repercussions surrounding carbon pricing policies: Give the revenue to people.

Late last month, a bipartisan group of lawmakers in the U.S. House of Representatives introduced legislation to place a fee on carbon and allocate all revenue to households in the form of a monthly dividend. Under the policy outlined in their bill, known as the Energy Innovation and Carbon Dividend

Act (H.R. 7173) www.energyinnovationact.org, nearly 70 percent of families, particularly those of low- and middle-income, will receive more money from the "carbon dividend" than they would pay in increased costs associated with the fee. That's more cash in your pocket!

The bill is sponsored by Representatives Ted Deutch (D-FL), Francis Rooney (R-FL), John Delaney (D-MD), Brian Fitzpatrick (R-PA), Charlie Crist (D-FL), Dave Trott (R-MI) and Anna Eshoo (D-CA). The sponsors who are returning in the 116th Congress say they intend to reintroduce their bill. As bipartisan support continues to grow, their legislation stands a good chance of moving forward.

Starting at \$15 per ton of carbon dioxide and increasing \$10 per ton each year, the Energy Innovation and Carbon Dividend Act will push the price of carbon to \$100 per ton within a decade. Such an ambitious price will achieve at least 40 percent emissions reductions within 12 years. The bill targets 90 percent reductions by mid-century.

The steep rate of increase sends a strong signal to the market that will accelerate the transition, already under way, to a clean energy economy. Such an ambitious price would not be possible without returning revenue to households. In fact, a study of this policy from Regional Economic Models, Inc., found this approach would actually add 2.1 million jobs to the economy in the first 10 years!

Climate scientists are clear that to avoid the worst impacts of climate change -- coastal cities under water, food shortages, more extreme weather and flooding, mass migrations, unbear-

able heat waves -- society must dramatically reduce its carbon dioxide emissions. That message was delivered most recently in the fourth installment of the National Climate Assessment, as well as the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's report earlier this fall. The IPCC report specifically mentioned carbon pricing as a way forward to effectively reduce emissions and stabilize our climate.

In Western North Carolina, we are already experiencing some of the ill-effects of climate change, from extreme drought and wildfires, to the extreme rainfall events we have seen in the past few years, to more extreme temperatures. The Fourth National Climate Assessment states that we will see longer and more extreme heat waves in the summer, and that the number of rainfall events exceeding three inches continues to increase almost annually.

The IPCC has warned that time is running out for the world to take the unprecedented steps to ward off climate catastrophe. If the rioting in France keeps nations from implementing a price on carbon, catastrophe is assured. But with the Energy Innovation and Carbon Dividend Act, American lawmakers have provided a model that can calm anxious citizens. By returning revenue to households, nations can implement carbon pricing in a way that is good for their people and good for their economies.

Mark Reynolds is executive director of Citizens' Climate Lobby. Steffi Rausch is the CCL Chapter Lead for the Asheville area and a local web designer for Evolv.com.

A complex truth of Mission, Dogwood futures

Your Turn

Janice Brumit
Guest columnist

Dogwood Health Trust, a private non-operating foundation, is truly a transformational opportunity for all of western North Carolina. For this reason we believe it is critically important to address several points made in Scott Rogers' December 18 Letter to the Editor.

We'll start with some complexities: each year every private non-operating foundation must make qualified distributions that equal approximately 5 percent of the 12-month average fair market value of its net investable assets (less allowable deductions of cash held for charitable purposes and a credit for the excise taxes paid). Said more simply if not technically perfect, every private non-operating foundation must donate approximately 5 percent of its total investable funds annually. The impact of this requirement for Dogwood is significantly different -- yielding donations twenty times greater -- than the assertion of Rev. Rogers that foundations distribute "5 percent of the earnings or growth for the previous year."

Since the Trust's Articles of Incorporation are posted publicly on the website of the NC Secretary of State and as well as at DogwoodHealthTrust.org, there is no need to "assume" its classification. These Articles of Incorporation filed with the North Carolina Secretary of State on May 16, 2018, clearly state the Trust's intent to establish itself as a nonprofit corporation, as well as its name, purpose and sections of the Internal Revenue Code under which it is organized; specifically, "The corporation is organized and operated exclusively for charitable purposes within the meaning of Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code..."

Complexities aside, we believe that the focus should remain on the Trust's sole purpose: to dramatically improve the health and well-being of all people and communities of Western North Carolina.

The Articles also state the Trust is a private foundation and will comply with applicable requirements when recognized as such by the Internal Revenue Service. This offers the chance to correct another misstatement in the Dec 18 letter. It states, "there may not be minimum requirements for 5 percent distribution, but an average of performance/ earnings." That is simply inaccurate.

We appreciate that Dogwood Health Trust and healthcare conversion foundations are new concepts for many and are not without their real complexities. For those reasons, we recommend that those with questions access written resources or ask for facts. In this case the facts were easily discernible from the Dogwood Articles filed on May 16, and from reputable organizations such as the Council on Foundations, Grantmakers in Health, and the Internal Revenue Service, all of which have clear resources available outlining how a private foundation's annual required minimum distribution is calculated.

Complexities aside, we believe that the focus should remain on the Trust's sole purpose: to dramatically improve the health and well-being of all people and communities of Western North Carolina. No community anywhere in America has ever had such a blessing per capita as is Dogwood's ability to annually provide tens of millions of dollars to improve the health and well-being of its community.

The Trust is being formed by your neighbors who are volunteering their time and good will. It is an evolution... one from which all Western North Carolinians will benefit. Together we can build something truly transformational.

Janice Brumit is the Chair of Dogwood Health Trust.



Patsy served as an unofficial bridesmaid when Jerry Conner became an officiant and married many couples in his home. PROVIDED

Reflections on caring, loss and a local band of angels

Your Turn

Jerry Conner
Guest columnist

I just lost my companion, Patsy, of 13 years and want to thank North Asheville Animal Hospital for their caring, compassion and outreach. It was love at first sight when I walked by her cage at Brother Wolf's 13 years ago. Her gaze followed me as I crossed in front of her and then back again. When I asked to hold her, she buried her head under my arm and pushed hard, I was smitten. That was Patsy's way of giving you a hug and it continued for all these years.

During my years of heart attacks, strokes and other health issues which now have me in a walker, she was always there to greet me with a tail wag that could whip up a breeze. As a single parent, after my son left home, she filled the void and exuded that unrequited love, which is exactly what pet owners understand and are so grateful of their companions.

I became an officiant and married many couples in my home and Patsy was the unofficial bride's maid. She got so excited when a couple came to the door. Afterwards, she would come lay by my side as she usually did and raise her head up for me to stroke.

During her last few days, she awoke

and lost her ability to use her hind legs. I rushed her to North Asheville Animal Hospital, where she was no stranger, as they have looked after her since a pup. The minute I got out of the car at the Hospital, the attendants spotted my distress and rushed to help bring both of us into the lobby. They brought a blanket pad over for Patsy to rest upon as we waited to see the doctor, and even stood by me offering consolation.

Dr. Wootten, upon examination of Patsy, suggested that she would not get any better and that they keep her comfortable in a special glass room, where she could be observed. I was also given the option of coming by and visiting her as often as I wished. After my last visit, that night, the attendant on duty took a picture of Patsy and texted it to me to let me know she was resting well. Patsy got worse over night and then lost the use of her front legs.

I went to the hospital the next day, to find the entire staff reaching out to me with sympathy and strength to help me get through the morning. I lost my Mother, years ago, and remember how she held on until I could make it to the hospital before she passed. Those memories returned as I was led into a special bereavement room to await Patsy. We spent the last minutes together as she could barely hold her head up, but her tail still wagged. It was the hardest drive

I ever took, with tearful eyes and thoughts of her not greeting me at home upon my arrival.

My story doesn't end there. A few days after Patsy's passing, I received a parcel in the mail. I opened it to find a beautiful laminated memorial of Patsy with her picture and one of the most touching poems entitled "Waiting at The Door." It begins: "I was just a pup when we first met, I loved you from the start.

You picked me up and took me home and placed me in your heart"...

And ends: "...For when you're called to Heaven, I'll be waiting at the door."

In addition, a special sympathy card along with handwritten note from Dr. Wootten was included. I was so touched by this kindness above and beyond her duty as a doctor.

In these troubling times with so much bullying, hate and violence, these simple acts of kindness and outreach bring forth the true meaning and spirit of Christmas. I am thankful to North Asheville Animal Hospital and their Band of Angels that looked over "Sweet Patsy," as they called her, and all the other pets in their care. My Christmas was better remembering your compassion.

Jerry Conner lives in Asheville.