

Voluntary Carbon Tax Witness

Many of us are very concerned about climate change. Individual actions (such as driving a Prius and changing to more efficient light bulbs) are important and essential for addressing climate change, but by themselves are insufficient to address the full problem. The critical challenge is to reduce worldwide use of carbon. In order to effectively address climate change, we need approaches that provide broader incentives for the entire population and the economy to reduce worldwide use of fossil fuels. A U.S. and/or international carbon tax would be a powerful incentive toward that end. There is broad agreement that a carbon tax would be one of the most effective ways to address the threat of climate change. The Friends Committee on National Legislation (FCNL) supports the implementation of such a carbon tax (http://fcnل.org/issues/energy/carbon_tax_progress_report/).

Although a carbon tax appears politically unlikely in the near future, we can make a witness for a carbon tax by making a personal choice to participate in a Voluntary Carbon Tax Witness similar to programs at Mt. Toby and Storrs Meetings. As George Fox suggests, we can “*Be patterns, be examples...that [our] life may preach among all sorts of people, and to them...*”

Climate change can be overwhelming and we all wear a carbon sword. Remembering George Fox’s words to William Penn, “*wear (your sword) as long as thee can,*” we take on this witness as we are led. Eleven individuals associated with at Hartford Meeting are feeling led to a specific climate witness, and have agreed to join together in a voluntary carbon tax witness. We are doing it as a witness in support of legislation implementing a carbon tax. Additionally, the voluntary carbon tax is also a way for participants to become more aware of their own personal choices regarding carbon usage and to financially support others who are working on climate change. We invite others who are similarly led to join us in this witness.

Those doing the witness pledge will individually select a tax rate for one or more of our personal carbon-use expenditures on:

- driving
- heating
- electricity
- air transportation
- other

The amount of one’s pledge is confidential; the witness is public. We are hopeful that this witness is seen by Quakers and others as an opportunity to take meaningful action that aligns with their values and they too, will feel led to this witness. Where the people lead, politicians may eventually follow.

For more information about Voluntary Carbon Tax Witness go to <http://voluntarycarbontax.org/>.

Friends approved the following minute establishing the Hartford Monthly Meeting Voluntary Carbon Tax Witness at the January 2014 Meeting for Business:

1) Hartford Meeting minutes its support for those in the Meeting undertaking the Voluntary Carbon Tax Witness. And 2) approved the creation of a special Hartford Monthly Meeting Carbon Tax designated account to receive and distribute the funds pledged by those participating in the witness as described in the “Procedures” below.

Procedures: Everyone who witnesses is counted, but the amount for each witness is confidential and known only by the fund steward. At the end of each quarter each person tallies their total voluntary tax for the quarter and remits a check to the fund steward. The Peace and Social Concerns Committee, in consultation with all donors and using Quaker practice, will discern how the funds collected during the quarter will be used. Checks will be disbursed to organizations or projects sharing Quaker values and known to be working to reduce further climate change, to mitigate disasters caused by climate change, or to mobilize public support for either or both of these. If at any point, the carbon tax witness is no longer actively collecting and distributing the "carbon tax" funds, any remaining funds should be used for the above listed purposes at the discretion of the Meeting.