

Old Country Lawyer, December, 2009
Local Action Again

Leaders of many nations expanded their carbon footprints by attending the Copenhagen conference on climate change. Final measurements remain to be tallied as to whether more carbon dioxide was emitted into the atmosphere by the mechanisms of their individual travel to Copenhagen or by the interminable and largely unproductive streams of spoken words. Had any of them airplane-pooled in their travel to the event, at least a favorable example might have been set.

The science is easy. If less carbon is oxidized, the climate changes less and life forms adapted to the existing climate get to survive. If more carbon is oxidized, the climate changes more and life forms adapted to the existing climate die.

Likewise, the economics is easy. Demand for energy will continue to increase. As long as oxidizing carbon is a less-expensive way to create energy, more carbon will be oxidized. If carbon fuels are made more expensive, less carbon will be oxidized.

Since the national Democratic Party has pretty well ensured its self-destruction in 2010, the Party should seize these remaining few moments of glory and Do the Right Thing. Increase the federal gasoline tax by a buck a gallon. Raising the pump price from \$2.50 to \$3.50 will significantly reduce gasoline usage and thereby reduce carbon emissions. The additional one hundred twenty billion dollars per year raised by that tax increase would pay for the estimated eighty billion dollars a year that government-run single-payer health care would cost, and leave forty billion dollars a year for members of Congress to earmark as they saw fit, possibly even as an annual installment toward buying back our debt from China over fifty years.

That action by the federal government being unlikely, local governments have some obligation to take what actions may be within their jurisdictions to reduce carbon emissions. City governments might amend their zoning codes to require that public and commercial parking must provide parking for electric vehicles with charging stations. One spot for each commercial parking area which zoning requires, with additional spots for each ten parking spaces, should be reserved for an electric vehicle with the requirement that the parking lot owner provide an electric recharging facility with solar-assisted power. Zoning codes might similarly be amended to require that public and commercial parking areas provide bicycle parking with appropriate specifications.

City and county governments, and other governments having authority over building codes, might mandate exterior walls and roofs have solar-powered photovoltaic electrical generating capacities. Building codes might be amended to encourage wind-powered electrical generators on commercial lots of sufficient size, rather than discouraging tower construction. Utility companies will oppose any local government action that decentralizes power generation, since anybody who produces power on-site will buy less from the utility company. Local governments have a moral responsibility to stand up to utility lobbyists and facilitate their citizens producing their own electricity so as to minimize carbon emissions.

When the establishment news media reports with a straight face that the People's Republic of China wants "rich" nations like the United States to pay a subsidy to China as a bribe to not burn coal so as not to cause the atmosphere to heat, the sea level to rise, and the coastal

river valleys of China to flood, one cannot expect that there will be much incentive for the leaders of nations to come to a comprehensive agreement to diminish carbon oxidation. This leaves commissioners in Portage County and council members in Aurora and Streetsboro and Kent and Ravenna to set an example for reducing carbon oxidation so all those rich folks who live on the sea shore don't decide they want to move in with us.

- Christopher J. Mallin, Old Country Lawyer