To the Editor:

There has been a lot frightening and vividly portrayed news about extreme weather lately that has brought our collection attention to the urgent need to address human-cause climate change. Unstoppable wildfires caused by sustained droughts, Tennessee floods, Hurricane Ida, and other weather events worldwide have put the issue of climate change front and center. The recent report from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change has issued a “red alert” about the urgency of addressing climate change.

In the face of all this discouraging news one can feel hopeless and inconsequential as a single individual. But there is an opportunity to take immediate action as a concerned and informed citizen in the current “climate” of the Congress. The U.S. Senate Finance Committee this very week is discussing a budget reconciliation bill. A carbon pricing feature will be incorporated into this bill if senators hear from their constituents that it is important to them. Budget reconciliation may be adopted by the senate if 51 of its members agree to certain adjustments in spending and revenue. A price on carbon involves a fee assessed on the producer for oil, natural gas, or coal. These fossil fuels are what account for a large share of the greenhouse gas emissions that are causing the climate change the effects of which we are all experiencing. Our own Ohio U.S. Senator, Sherrod Brown, is a member of the Finance Committee.

A price on carbon will provide quality jobs in renewable energy (the U.S. Department of Labor, for example, lists solar panel installer as the fastest growing job in the U.S.). This action will strengthen the manufacturing base for products like solar panels and wind turbines, much of which are made from glass products that were once manufactured in this part of Appalachia. Carbon pricing will help the U.S. toward energy independence—by reducing the demand for fuel and for the consumption of fossil fuels. It will provide affordable energy by leading to an equal carbon dividend for consumers. The U.S. is being left behind in pricing carbon—European countries are imposing a price on carbon and will impose a tariff on our carbon exports if we don’t have a price on carbon; we need to stay internationally competitive.

One may think that making the transition to renewable energy will be expensive. But consider the alternative of doing nothing. Extreme weather has caused more than $450 billion in damage nationwide since 2005; the number of disasters causing more than $1 billion in damage reached 22 last year, a record. The Government Accountability Office has warned those costs may be unsustainable. Yet the demand keeps increasing: When the Federal Emergency Management Agency introduced a new program to help cities and states prepare for disasters, the requests far outstripped the amount of money available. The increasing frequency and severity of hurricanes poses another dilemma: Even if the money could be found for projects to protect places like southern Louisiana, are such efforts a good way to spend public money, especially as the need for climate resilience around the country is growing and coastlines disappear further every year?

A price on carbon will, furthermore, get us to net zero emissions by 2050 with a blend of renewable fuel sources that provide clean, affordable energy. The move to carbon pricing will send a signal to the economy and to industry to attend to energy efficiency, electric energy from renewables, and carbon capture. Reducing greenhouse gas emissions will save 4.5 million lives over 50 years by decreasing premature deaths due to air pollution. Energy companies will, of course, raise their prices for products like gasoline, but economists have shown that up to 85% of individual Americans can cover the increased costs by the dividend that is provided to them through the carbon pricing program. In a re-imagined Appalachia that can advance from a dependency on coal and other extractive industries, carbon pricing and increases in investment in renewable energy can bring sustainable good jobs to our region as well as cleaner air and water.

Please contact Senator Brown this week and urge him to include carbon pricing in the budget reconciliation bill. [https://www.brown.senate.gov/contact/email](https://webmail.suddenlink.net/do/redirect?url=https%253A%252F%252Fwww.brown.senate.gov%252Fcontact%252Femail&hmac=be1fdcf3558ca1012e0dfe4a8b7889ef)

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