

GOP senior statesmen making push for a carbon tax

February 8 2017, by Catherine Lucey And Julie Pace



President Donald Trump speaks during a meeting with county sheriffs in the Roosevelt Room of the White House in Washington, Tuesday, Feb. 7, 2017. (AP Photo/Evan Vucci)

A group of Republican senior statesmen are pushing for a carbon tax to combat the effects of climate change, and hoping to sell their plan to the White House.

Former Secretary of State Jim Baker is leading the effort, which also includes former Secretary of State George Shultz. In an opinion piece published Tuesday night in The Wall Street Journal, they argued "there is mounting evidence of problems with the atmosphere that are growing too compelling to ignore."

The group will meet Wednesday with White House officials, including Vice President Mike Pence, senior adviser Jared Kushner, and Gary Cohn, director of the National Economic Council. Ivanka Trump is also expected to attend, according to a person familiar with the plans. The person was not authorized to discuss the meeting publicly and insisted on anonymity.

Carbon taxes are designed to raise the cost of [fossil fuels](#) to bring down consumption. Baker and Shultz detailed in the opinion piece their plan for a gradually increasing [carbon tax](#), with dividends being returned to people, as well as border adjustments for the carbon content of exports and imports and the rollback of regulations.

According to an outline of the plan, the group will call for a gradually increasing carbon tax that "might begin at \$40 a ton and increase steadily over time." It would raise \$200 billion to \$300 billion annually. They would then redistribute tax proceeds back to consumers on a quarterly basis in what they call "carbon dividends" that could be approximately \$2,000 annually for a family of four.

Their plan would also set "border adjustments" based on carbon, which would result in fees for products from countries without similar carbon pricing systems. And they would seek to rollback regulations enacted under Obama, including the Clean Power Plan.

So far, Trump has sent mixed signals on whether or how he will try to slow Earth's warming temperatures and rising sea levels.

During the transition, Trump met with prominent climate activists Al Gore and Leonardo DiCaprio. Ivanka Trump, a close adviser to her father, has indicated interest in working on the issue. But the president has also hired oil industry champions who want to reverse President Barack Obama's efforts to rein in emissions.

The White House press office did not immediately respond to request for comment.

Also supporting Baker's effort are Hank Paulson, treasury secretary for former President George W. Bush; Greg Mankiw, who chaired Bush's Council of Economic Advisers; and Marty Feldstein, chairman of President Ronald Reagan's Council of Economic Advisors, according to the person familiar with the plans.

Also on the list are former Walmart chairman Rob Walton; Thomas Stephenson, a partner at the venture capital firm Sequoia Capital; and Ted Halstead, founder of New America and the Climate Leadership Council.

The vast majority of peer-reviewed studies and climate scientists agree the planet is warming, mostly due to man-made sources. Under Obama, the U.S. has dramatically ramped up production of renewable energy from sources like solar, in part through Energy Department grants.

Some environmental activists support a tax on emissions to help transition off fossil fuels. Sen. Bernie Sanders advocated for a carbon tax as part of his bid for the Democratic nomination last year. Hillary Clinton, the Democratic nominee, never supported a tax, though she offered a slew of proposals to deal with climate change.

Trump's Secretary of State Rex Tillerson was the longtime chief executive officer of Exxon Mobil. Exxon was long considered a leading

opponent of efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from burning fossil fuels. But under Tillerson's leadership, Exxon has started planning for climate change and even voiced support for a carbon tax.

Trump's choice to run the Environmental Protection Agency is Oklahoma Attorney General Scott Pruitt, who denies [climate change](#) science. And Trump's nominee to run the Energy Department, former Gov. Rick Perry, also has questioned climate science while working to promote coal-fired power in Texas, though he also oversaw the growth of renewable power in Texas, which became a leading wind-energy producer while he was governor.

Carbon tax legislation is unlikely to receive a warm welcome in the GOP-controlled Congress, where Republicans were staunchly opposed to Obama's climate agenda. Last year, Republicans in the House approved symbolic measures opposing a fee on crude oil and a carbon tax on emissions.

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Citation: GOP senior statesmen making push for a carbon tax (2017, February 8) retrieved 9 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2017-02-gop-senior-statesmen-carbon-tax.html>

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