Testimony before the EPA "listening session" November 7, 2013 concerning limits on greenhouse gas pollution from existing power plants.

Good morning. My name is Eric Goplerud, and I am speaking on behalf of the Unitarian Univeralist Congregation of Fairfax (Virginia). The Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Fairfax is a religious community of about 1,100 adults, youth and children dedicated to the free and responsible search for religious truth and meaning.

Will we live in a world where our children will not even know that there once were butterflies? Where the dead pine forests of the Rockies blaze with wildfires and there are no glaciers? Where fish of the reefs and live corals exist only in aquariums? Where songbirds are silent? Where Washington, DC, bakes 100 days a year with temperatures above 90 degrees?

It is rapidly becoming apparent that climate change overshadows and is contributing to the many great problems facing humanity: War and peace, poverty, injustice, hunger and disease. Climate change is real. Humans are causing or substantially contributing to it. Climate disruption is already inflicting suffering on the earth’s most vulnerable peoples and threatening the extinction of many animal and plant species. Soon we will pass a point of no return. Yet, the worst effects of climate change can be avoided… there is hope. But, we have to act now.

Last Sunday, November 3, the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Fairfax (Virginia) overwhelmingly approved a Congregational Resolution on Climate Change.

The resolution, which I will leave with you, states, in part:

*We affirm the value of life, the sacredness of each person and all life on the planet. We recognize that human actions can impact the interdependent web of life on our planet and we are called to protect and cherish life.

Global climate change is fundamentally a moral, ethical and social justice crisis. We have a responsibility to work with faith communities everywhere to act to avert and limit the potential catastrophic effects of climate change.*

*Although options exist for avoiding the worst consequences of climate change and for limiting the effects of past and current greenhouse gas pollution, we are fast approaching tipping points where climate driven catastrophes will overwhelm humanity’s ability to mitigate effects or adapt to changes.*

*Climate change is one of the greatest moral, technical and political challenges in human history. We affirm the value of hope even in the gravest of circumstances--a hope justified not only by the power of human action for good, but also by our understanding of the creative force of life in the universe.*

***Therefore, be it resolved:***

*UUCF affirms that we ground our mission and our ministries in reverence for the Earth. We will act personally and as a congregation to avert and limit this catastrophe.*

*We call for the U.S. government to counter the forces that are causing climate change, and to do so within the short time we have left to avert the worst of climate chaos:*

* *Price carbon to reflect its true societal price in order to lower demand for fossil fuels and encourage use of non-polluting energy sources.*
* *Dramatically reduce pollution from power plant energy sources, especially coal- and gas-fired power plants, shifting to emission-free or very low emission alternatives.*

*We pledge help and call for our leaders to assist vulnerable and impoverished communities, including those who will be affected by changes in coal and gas extraction, who will bear the greatest burdens from global climate change.*

The UUCF climate change resolution signifies that this issue is of the highest importance and urgency to UUCF members. Over the past decade this congregation has voted on only three other resolutions.

Together, we can make real, measurable, positive impacts that help to reverse the course on global warming and climate changes.

The Unitarian Universalist Association’s (UUA) 2006 Statement of Conscience states:

*We declare that we will not acquiesce to the ongoing degradation and destruction of life that human actions are leaving to our children and grandchildren.*

The Unitarian Universalist Association has joined with other faith-based and secular investors with more than $900 billion in combined assets under management, to strongly support the Carbon Pollution Standard for new power plants and urge you to finalize the rule soon. In a September 20 letter to President Obama, we “*urge the President and EPA to proceed with a program to reduce carbon pollution from existing power plants as a critical next step in reducing the impacts of climate change and catalyzing the burgeoning clean energy economy.”*

In the United States, in the absence of climate legislation, EPA carbon pollution standards for new and existing power plants represent the best opportunity to limit the risks of the climate change. We applaud the administration for its commitment to these standards and encourage the rapid finalization of the new source standards and the creation and implementation of existing source standards.

Thank you.

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