

The Energy Innovation and Carbon Dividend Act: Information for Jewish Leaders and Communities

More and more Jewish individuals and communities are concerned or alarmed about the effects of climate change: shortened growing seasons threaten the world's food supply; sea level rise, more frequent and intense forest fires, hurricanes, flooding, drought, and extreme heat endanger all of us, but especially society's most vulnerable. As Jews, we are commanded to engage in *tikkun olam*, repair of the world, and that commandment today rings out as a call to combat climate change. We recognize that we are all vulnerable, and that our children and our children's children will be even more so because of climate change. But we have it within our power to provide a safer, brighter future.

This document shares information about national legislation, the Energy Innovation and Carbon Dividend Act, H.R. 763, that would help address climate change by creating significant economy-wide emission reductions while benefiting human health and households, especially in vulnerable low-income communities.

[Multiple carbon pricing bills](#) have been introduced in the current Congress to provide incentives for an economy-wide transition from fossil fuels to renewable, clean-energy sources. All of these bills include measures to protect low-income households from energy price increases. Our favorite is the Energy Innovation and Carbon Dividend Act because it is effective, fair, and has a chance of becoming law. The Energy Innovation Act currently has 75 cosponsors in Congress—the most cosponsors of any carbon pricing bill in U.S. history.

How does it work? The Energy Innovation Act places a rising fee on carbon at the source (e.g., the well, port, or mine), starting at \$15 per metric ton and going up \$10 each year.¹ Revenues from the fee are distributed to households on a per-capita basis, with children 18 and under receiving half of a share. The dividend is distributed monthly, and it more than offsets higher costs of goods and energy for the vast majority of

Jewish support for carbon pricing

- [A 2005 resolution](#) from the **Central Conference of American Rabbis** urges the federal government “to adopt a variety of policies to accomplish emissions reductions, including: instituting programs that use pricing to lower demand for fossil fuels.”
- **The Union of Reform Judaism** states in [a 2009 resolution](#) that it supports “a carbon tax or other methods ... that ensure that the price of energy reflects its *true* costs.”
- A 2015 [Rabbinic Letter on the Climate Crisis](#), signed by 425 rabbis, calls for “a system of carbon fees and public dividends that rewards our society for moving beyond the Carbon economy.”
- [Hazon](#) and the [Jewish Climate Action Network](#) (JCAN) endorsed the Energy Innovation Act in 2019–20.

¹ To very rough approximation, \$1/metric ton of CO₂-equivalent emissions is about 1 penny per gallon of gas at the pump, but applied to all sources of energy, in proportion to how much greenhouse gas they emit. The price increases triggered by the EICDA, spread across the entire economy, are projected to reduce emissions 90% by mid-century.



lower and middle income households. A “border carbon adjustment” protects U.S. manufacturers and jobs and provides incentive for other countries to institute similar carbon pricing policies.

There is a strong consensus among economists—similar to the scientific consensus about climate change itself—that the most efficient and effective tool for reducing greenhouse gas emissions is to put a price on carbon. [A statement in support of this policy](#) was signed by over 3,500 economists including every living former chair of the federal reserve and 27 Nobel laureates. This is the largest number of economists to endorse any policy on any topic, ever.

Carbon pricing as proposed in the Energy Innovation and Carbon Dividend Act is simple, elegant, and effective. It is good for the environment and good for human health. It benefits all of us—but especially vulnerable frontline communities that have the least resilience in the face of increasingly frequent climate disasters.

What Can you do?

There is plenty to do, for all members of the Jewish community!

1. We encourage Jewish leaders, synagogue boards, and social action committees or green teams to endorse the bill at <https://energyinnovationact.org/endorse/>.
2. Find out if your member of Congress has signed on as a cosponsor at <https://energyinnovationact.org/>. If they have, write or call to thank them! If they have not, write or call to share your concern about climate change and your interest in solutions, including the Energy Innovation and Carbon Dividend Act (H.R. 763).
3. Learn more about all aspects of climate change and talk with family and friends about it, focusing on positive actions.
4. Join [Citizens' Climate Lobby](#) (CCL) to learn more about climate advocacy and building the political will for a livable world, or if you have the means, consider [making a donation](#).
5. Join Jewish and other faith-based environmental organizations such as the [Jewish Climate Action Network](#) (JCAN), [Hazon](#), [Jewish Earth Alliance](#), the [Environmental Justice cohort from the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism](#), [GreenFaith](#), and [Interfaith Power & Light](#).

Additional Resources

Information about the Energy Innovation Act: <https://energyinnovationact.org/>

[Information about carbon pricing from Public Radio International](#)

[Assessment of the Energy Innovation Act from the Columbia Center on Energy Policy](#)

Yonatan Malin and Judy Berlfein

Co-leaders of the Citizens' Climate Lobby Jewish Action Team

Emails: yonmalin@gmail.com, judyberlfein@gmail.com

Last updated January 9, 2020