

## PARIS AGREEMENT

### Background

- United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
  - UNFCCC negotiated at the first Earth Summit in Rio in 1992
  - Went into force with annual conferences starting in 1994
  - This year's meeting in Paris was 21<sup>st</sup> Conference of Parties or COP 21.
- Kyoto Protocol
  - Negotiated 1997, to run to 2020
  - Set up binding targets to reduce greenhouse gas emissions
  - Mandated reduction of greenhouse gas emissions to “a level that would prevent dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system”
  - Covered only developed countries – China and India left out
  - United States did not ratify, Canada pulled out.
- Copenhagen Accord 2009
  - Widely considered a failure – nickname “Brokenhagen”
  - Not legally binding
  - Set no targets for reducing emissions
  - This was when Obama and Clinton walked in on secret meeting of China, South Africa, India and Brazil. Led to international rancor and discord.
  - One success: Setting 2C above pre-industrial levels as the limit for global warming.

### Leadup to Paris

- New climate regime
  - Paris Agreement to go into place after Kyoto Protocol expires in 2020
  - Rather than imposing targets, each country made “intended nationally determined contributions” or voluntary pledges for reducing carbon emissions
  - Agreement would cover all countries, not just developed countries
- Clean Power Plan
  - EPA proposed in June 2014, issued rule in August 2015.
  - Linchpin of the U.S. commitment to the Paris Agreement
  - First time the U.S. has regulated greenhouse gas emissions
  - Goal: Reduce CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from power plants by 32 percent by 2030 from 2005 levels.
  - Mandates various goals for states to lower carbon emissions from power plants, but provides multiple ways they can do it.
  - Ohio's goal is aggressive because we are one of the most polluting states.
  - 27 states including Ohio have sued to overturn the plan. At the same time Ohio is also putting together a plan to meet CPP requirements.
  - Supreme Court has put a stay on Clean Power Plan until state lawsuits sorted out.
- U.S. China Agreement – September 2015
  - Two biggest greenhouse gas emitters – China passed US in 2005
  - U.S. agrees to lower overall carbon emissions 26-28% from 2005 levels by 2025.
  - China agrees to peak CO<sub>2</sub> emissions by 2030 (have since said earlier), and increase share of renewable energy to 20% by 2030. China also has cap and trade in several cities and will institute a nationwide cap and trade system in 2017.
  - Paved the way for other nations to make commitments to the Paris climate talks

## Paris Climate Talks

- Took place November 30 – December 11, 2015
- In shadow of Paris terrorist attacks of November 13
  - French government banned demonstrations – many arrests November 30
  - 600,000 marched in cities around world – 100 at climate march in Columbus
- Tens of thousands of activists from all over the world attended and held events
  - Indigenous groups
  - Rights of nature tribunal
  - Exxon trials
  - Naomi Klein's Leapfrog Manifesto
  - Anti-fracking demonstrations
  - Trade and climate

## Strengths

- For the first time, agreement covers all countries
  - 195 countries signed
  - Both developed and developing countries set targets
- Sets up Green Climate Fund
  - \$100 billion a year by 2020 from wealthy countries to finance climate adaptation and mitigation in developing countries that suffer effects of climate change
- Historic in that it not only stated goal of limiting temperature rise to 2C, but also states we must get as close to 1.5C as possible
  - Climate Vulnerable Forum of island nations strongly lobbied for this
  - Difference between 1.5C and 2C is the existence of many island nations
- Includes requirement to review emissions targets every five years and ratchet them up

## Weaknesses

- Emissions targets not legally binding
  - Could not be or would have to go through U.S. Senate – full of climate deniers
  - Even financial commitments could not be legally binding (but Obama got \$3 billion for U.S. commitment in omnibus bill)
  - But requirement to review goals every five years is legally binding
  - And if nations do not meet their commitments, they can be shamed by other countries. Naming and shaming can work very well in such situations.
- All commitments together still only get us to warming of 2.7C.
  - With no action we are looking at 4-5C warming – catastrophic
  - Currently we are at 0.8C with 0.8C in the pipeline due to long half-life of carbon
  - Much more needs to be done to get this down to 2C much less 1.5C which is essentially where we are now if we stopped all greenhouse gas emissions today.
- Trade and climate – Naomi Klein critique
  - TPP is legally binding – would allow countries to sue governments over laws that threaten “future expected profits”
  - Lawsuits heard by panel of international lawyers who can serve as either judge or advocate.
  - TransCanada now suing U.S. over veto of Keystone Pipeline under similar clause in NAFTA
  - U.S. has ability to defend itself in this setting or pay the fine. Small countries don't.

### **Where we stand today: Precarious**

- Obama's entire climate plan rests on executive action
  - Clean Power Plan is a regulation through EPA
  - Paris Agreement not legally binding
  - This means a different administration could come in and dismantle all progress
- Clean Power Plan could get overturned in court
  - More of a concern before Scalia died.
  - 4-4 ruling by court means that previous ruling stands
  - DC Court of Appeals ruled against challenges to Clean Power Plan

### **Presidential candidates on climate**

- Hillary Clinton
  - 500 million solar panels installed
  - Renewable energy to power every home by end of first administration (2020)
  - Cut greenhouse gas emissions 30 percent below 2005 levels by end of second administration (2024)
- Bernie Sanders
  - Cut carbon pollution 40 percent by 2030 and 80 percent by 2050
  - Put a tax on carbon pollution
    - Return proceeds to American consumers
    - Use some to help coal miners and others in fossil fuel industry transition to clean energy jobs
    - Use some to help poor and vulnerable communities most impacted by climate change
  - Repeal subsidies to fossil fuel corporations
  - Create 10 million jobs in clean energy industries
- Donald Trump
  - Dismantle EPA
  - Climate change is a hoax created by China to make U.S. manufacturing non-competitive
  - We can leave "a little bit" for the environment but commerce comes first
- Ted Cruz
  - Oversaw Congressional hearings attacking board president of Sierra Club
  - "Climate change is not a science. It's religion"
  - Uses climate denier talking points – e.g. "pause" in global warming
- John Kasich
  - Says humans are a contributor to climate change
  - Supports "all of the above" energy plan
  - But signed SB 310 making Ohio the first state to roll back renewable energy standards, over the objections of environmentalist, business, and faith groups.
  - Also signed draconian setback law that squashed Ohio's wind industry. Wind turbines must be ¼ mile from any structure. Fracking rigs can be next to farmhouse.

**Action Item: Write your representative: Carbon fee and dividend**