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Opinion

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Our View

U.S. can't take on climate change by itself

“The U.S. can't go it alone.” For many years policy wonks in Washington, D.C., and elsewhere have told Americans the U.S. shouldn't take on major international issues by itself.

Whether it's fighting terrorism or procuring fair trade deals, we've been told that the U.S. should join coalitions and not go it alone.

Add climate change to that list. President Joe Biden is making the battle against climate change a signature issue of his administration. He has formed a high level climate office, canceled the Keystone XL oil pipeline from Canada, stopped oil and gas drilling on federal land, rejoined the Paris Climate Agreement



John Kerry

and injected climate into almost every policy-level discussion in the federal government.

Fair enough — as long as the U.S. economy in general and agriculture in particular aren't sacrificed.

Farmers and ranchers are especially worried. On the one hand, they are told by some climate and anti-agriculture activists that they are a major contributor to climate change. Such accusations have been proven wrong, by the way.

On the other hand, farmers and ranchers are told they are a best hope for fighting climate change. By using their

land and crops to sequester carbon, they will keep it from getting into the atmosphere and intensifying the greenhouse effect, trapping solar heat.

As a result of the mixed signals, farmers worry their voices — and their livelihoods — could be lost amid the climate change rhetoric.

A recent statement puts the climate issue in a completely different light.

John Kerry, the administration's lead person on climate issues, told the BBC that the U.S. could reduce its carbon emissions to nothing and it wouldn't have a significant impact on the climate.

“He (Biden) knows Paris (climate agreement) alone

is not enough,” Kerry was quoted as saying. “Not when almost 90% of all the planet's global emissions come from outside of U.S. borders. We could go to zero tomorrow and the problem isn't solved.”

Unnamed in that conversation was the largest source of atmospheric carbon: China. According to the website Investopedia, China is the largest carbon polluter — by a long shot. It produces 28% of the atmospheric carbon — almost double the amount produced by the U.S.

And China's contribution to the problem continues to grow. Its carbon dioxide emissions are up 270% from 1992, and according to its statement in the Paris accords will not

peak for nine more years.

By comparison, U.S. carbon emissions are up 1.8% since 1992.

That means China has had its foot on the gas — literally — while the U.S. has slammed on the brakes.

The next largest source of carbon is India, at 7% of the world's total. Its emissions are up 253% since 1992, according to a 24/7 Wall Street report published in USA Today.

Biden says the U.S. “must lead” the effort to slow climate change.

But he must also make sure other nations, including China, are following and will do their part so a meaningful reduction on atmospheric carbon can be achieved.

Our View

Retroactive OT will bankrupt Washington ag

Washington farmers and ranchers must be protected from having to retroactively pay overtime as a result of a recent state Supreme Court ruling.

Without that protection, many farming operations could be bankrupted.

The Fair Labor Standards Act, passed by Congress in 1938, established a federal minimum wage and provided for overtime pay for work over 40 hours. The act provided a host of job classifications, including farmworkers, that are exempt from the overtime rule.

Washington lawmakers in 1959 adopted a similar provision into state law.

Though critics have posited that the exemption was the product of racism and the pandering to the needs of special interests, farmers noted that farm work is distinct from factory production. The seasonal nature of some farm work makes it difficult to schedule in 40-hour increments.

“May I say that the cow cannot be regulated by any law you may pass here,” Rep. Francis Dugan Culkin, R-N.Y., said during debate on the measure. “She gives down her milk at 6 o'clock in the morning. You can pass law until hell freezes over and you cannot change that.”

While the Washington Supreme Court did not change the schedules that govern cows in the Evergreen State, in a case filed by two former milkers from Yakima County it did strike down the exemption. The



DON JENKINS/Capital Press File

An American flag waves over the Temple of Justice in Olympia. A Washington Supreme Court ruling says farmworkers should be paid overtime, but left other questions unanswered.

court ruled 5-4 on Nov. 5, in *Martinez-Cuevas v. DeRuyter Brothers Dairy*, that farmworkers labor under dangerous conditions and are constitutionally entitled to time-and-half pay for hours worked over 40 in a week.

The ruling left room to interpret its scope. Narrowly read, the decision says that in the future dairy workers must be paid overtime. More broadly, the decision points to making the state's roughly 160,000 farmworkers eligible for overtime.

And many of them are filing lawsuits to collect and want to apply a separate state law that allows underpaid workers to reach back three years to collect wages. But that law was aimed at employers who evaded a legal responsibility.

Farmers should not be punished for following the law as it was written and understood at the time. Ag groups say that retroactive payouts and lawyer fees could bankrupt producers. The Washington State Dairy Federation calculates dairies alone

could be on the hook for \$90 million to \$120 million in back wages.

The majority opinion did not address the question of applying the ruling retroactively. Writing for the minority, however, Justice Charles Johnson said farmers shouldn't risk bankruptcy “because they paid what the law required of them at the time.” A subsequent ruling could clarify that question, as well as establish the scope of the original ruling.

In the meantime, Senate Republicans are backing a bill that would prohibit farmworkers from collecting overtime on past work.

The court's original ruling was wrongheaded, but allowing newly minted victims to retroactively collect overtime would be disastrous.

The court's ruling will lead to more automation and less farm employment. The misapplication of the law governing back pay will lead to less farms.

Our country is in a fight for its life

I generally read your Editorial Opinion piece and find you to be fairly on target. However, I think your conclusion in your editorial in the Jan. 15 issue missed the mark when you closed with “we must stop this now,” obviously referring to the tone of the public discussion of government administration.

My wife and I were discussing at lunch how our nation has become so politically, or should I say philosophically, divided. We began thinking back through the past presidents, say beginning with President Carter, and determined that yes, there have been ups and downs during the terms of both parties but no national division of this magnitude until the Obama administration.

The difference has been that during the course of the eight-year Obama administration the policies took a hard turn to the philosophic left. The Democratic Party was riding high and was prepared to keep moving in that direction with the election of Hillary Clinton in 2016.

The voting public stepped in and said, “Not so fast!” and elected Donald Trump in 2016. President Trump being a business person instead of a politician, recognized a mandate to move to the country back to the philosophic right, and did so to the satisfaction of the voters, receiving 10 million more votes in the 2020 election than he did in the 2016 election.

However, the Democratic Party, with the full undivided support of the print media and most of the electronic media, fought the hard turn back to the right from day one and all through the presi-

GUEST VIEW

Don Schellenberg



dent's term in office. The media (I read the AP articles) for four years have constantly used demeaning and descriptive words in front of his name when reporting on something the president did or said.

In my view they purposely did this in order to “incite” anger toward him, instead of just reporting the news. Sometimes the media just plain made up some things. Case in point, the daily news repeatedly reported that President Trump “incited” the attack on the U.S. Capitol in his speech to his supporters that morning. It all depends on how you interpret his words. In this case, the media extrapolated his words to say what the “press” wanted his words to say. And supporters of what the president has accomplished in the last four years are not supposed to be upset?

The bottom line now is that there are two strongly divergent philosophic and political views, socialism and government control verses capitalism and democracy. Regarding this issue there is NO “middle ground” so there is no “Can't we just all get along.”

Our country is in the fight for its life! Our country was founded as a democracy and has served us well, becoming the freest, most wealthy, most healthy and safest nation on earth. I, for one, do not want that to change.

Don Schellenberg of Dallas, Ore., was a lobbyist for the Oregon Farm Bureau from 1980 to 2008.

READERS' VIEW

Beware of manipulation

People are manipulated through fear.

- Fear of Saddam Hussein.
- Fear of terrorism.
- Fear of climate change.
- Fear of the corona virus.

The politicians and the media, with the help of academia and other recipients of money from the government, fan the flames of fear. People react to this fear

by doing what the so-called “experts” tell them to do:

- Destroy Iraq, bombing them into the Stone Age and killing hundreds of thousands of people.
- Hang humanity on a “Cross of Iron” by spending trillions of dollars on the military-industrial complex.
- Support alternative energy production that actually harms the environment without providing one kilowatt of baseload electrical generation.

• Surrender the Creator's precious gift of individual rights.

The beauty of the American system is that it uses the principle of individual rights to counter the evil in this world. The more individual rights are respected, the more justice prevails. Deny their rights and injustice flourishes.

The solutions of the so-called “experts” always involve violations of individual rights. For example, the “experts” state that Cana-

dian gray wolves are needed in America. The result of their flawed opinion is that the rancher's right to protect his herd has been stolen. What was once a right now requires permission from government.

Recently, our rights to work, to associate, to attend church, to be in control of our health care decisions, and even our right to hold an honest election have all been stolen from us. This theft has occurred because fear was invoked, followed by “experts”

telling us that these violations of our rights are necessary.

It is complete manipulation. The people are once again conned. The result is a loss of individual rights along with a corresponding increase in injustice.

Beware of manipulation. Despire the fear mongers. Remove the hollowness of the words “the Home of the Brave.”

*Roger Whitten
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