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We don't need to focus on every little solution; just a few that work, says energy policy expert Hal Harvey

BY EMILY GREEN
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We should listen to Hal Harvey. Unless you're a climate-policy buff, you've probably never heard of him, but he's been effectively chipping away at the climate change conundrum for decades.

He says if we stop plucking ideas from a bottomless menu of half-baked solutions and, instead, laser-focus our efforts on a handful of the most effective fixes, we might actually have a shot at avoiding complete climate calamity.

In 1991, when he was 29, Harvey co-founded the Energy Foundation, a philanthropic organization aimed solely at supporting policies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Today, it doles out about \$75 million in grants aimed at that purpose annually. In 1999, he helped establish Energy Foundation China, which grew to become one of China's largest foundations, helping to implement hundreds of energy regulations. He was also appointed to energy panels under presidents George H. W. Bush and Bill Clinton.

In addition to other accolades, Harvey was most recently awarded the U.N.'s 2018 Clean Air and Climate Change Award, and he serves as CEO of an environmental policy firm, Energy Innovation, in San Francisco. Under Harvey's direction, the firm recently released a free online tool, the Energy Policy Simulator (visit us.energypolicy.solutions), which allows users to design their own climate policy packages and apply them to different markets to see what effect they'll have on carbon emissions.

In Oregon, Harvey's worked with former

Gov. John Kitzhaber, Renewable Northwest and Climate Solutions, a nonprofit that pushes clean-energy policies. Climate Solutions is part of a coalition backing the Clean Energy Jobs bill, a cap-and-invest carbon-regulating law that failed in 2017 and 2018 but is poised for passage next year.

Harvey's climate strategy is straightforward, and understanding its basics can help vested interests worldwide determine what policies they should be pushing.

Simply put, Harvey argues that if the top 20 greenhouse gas-emitting countries target four sectors – electricity, manufacturing, transportation and building – with a few proven policies, humanity can achieve a 50 percent chance of avoiding the 2-degree Celsius increase in global temperatures that scientists warn would spell disaster.

These policies include laws to improve vehicle performance standards, carbon pricing structures and enacting more stringent energy-efficiency requirements in building codes.

It's a plan he laid out in his new book, "Designing Climate Solutions: A Policy Guide for Low-Carbon Energy," and one that he recently shared with a banquet-room-full of climate activists at Portland's downtown Hilton during Climate Solutions' annual dinner in late November.

"It turns out there are a small number of things you have to do to win on climate," he told the room, "and you have to do them rapidly, and you have to do them correctly."

Shortly before Harvey gave his keynote address, he sat down with Street Roots to discuss his book and how Oregonians should be

thinking about climate policy.

Emily Green: *The policies you've laid out in your book are practical ways of reducing emissions that will not eliminate modern conveniences and will not slow economic growth.*

What would you say to someone who says, "If we rely on this approach, we're digging our own graves because we need much more drastic and faster-acting policies"?

Hal Harvey: I'm always in favor of more serious and speedy action. My two mantras are speed and scale. These turn out to be the policies that deliver the most reductions. And the whole point of the book that we wrote, and our work, is to make sure that when people do expend political energy on climate change, they push the things that are going to make the biggest difference.

There's a thousand options. I heard yesterday somebody joke, "I heard if you eliminate plastic straws, that eliminates 1 degree Celsius," well that's a preposterous joke, but the point is if we are going to be effective, we have to choose the most effective policies and push them the hardest, we can't just do a little of everything. It won't get us

“One of the horrifying things about climate change is that the people who cause most suffer least.

Hal Harvey

Co-founder, Energy Foundation

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