

Opinion

GUEST OPINION

Religious leaders urge Congress, faithful to listen to climate scientists

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Across the religious spectrum, religious leaders are calling for national action to address global warming. Faith-based organizations and church councils in places that are most affected by global warming, particularly the nations of Africa and the Pacific Islands, have compelled America's faith community, including Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon, to address global warming.

Since 1999, the Oregon Interfaith Global Warming Campaign, coordinated by Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon, has been educating and mobilizing the faith community, elected officials and the public on global warming. Presentations by reputable climate scientists have been a critical part of our educational process. In fact, many participants have noted that hearing scientists explain the impact of global warming was pivotal to their increased commitment to the issue, even more than the words of theologians. Turns out, preachers are not the only ones to inspire and move people to action. In our time, scientists are becoming increasingly important to what some faiths call "reading the signs of the times."

Recently, the world's most prominent scientific body on the subject of global warming, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), released a major report on global warming. This report, which was compiled and reviewed by over 2,000 scientists and the governments of 154 countries, added further certainty to what we already know — global warming is real and human activity is accelerating it.

Fortunately, Oregonians are already taking steps to combat global warming in our daily lives and communities by investing in energy efficiency and renewable energy sources. At the state level, Gov. Kulongoski and the Legislature are working on several fronts to expand renewable energy sources, cap greenhouse gas emissions, increase fuel economy and increase commercial and residential investments in energy efficiency. In a few weeks dozens of religious leaders from throughout the state will share their concerns about global warming with their legislators in Salem.

While Oregon and Oregonians should be commended for our efforts to reduce global warming pollution, our efforts cannot solve the problem alone. The United States is one of the world's largest contributors of global warming pollution and the time has come for the United States to step up and become part of the solution. The question remains, will Congress and the Bush Administration listen to what these scientists and a growing chorus of American citizens, including the faith community, are saying?

It is time for the Bush Administration and Congress to take responsible action to address global warming. We need energy policies that guarantee emissions will decrease. This can be done by instituting mandatory caps on global warming pollution, promoting renewable energy and energy efficiency and instituting higher fuel economy standards. It is time to listen to the scientists and to those most affected by global warming. To love our neighbors, both local and global, it is imperative.

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