

Statement of Senator Bernie Sanders on Introducing the Climate Protection Act

I fear very much that our children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren are going to look back on this period in history and ask a very simple question: Where were they? Why didn't the United States of America, the most powerful nation on earth, lead the international community in cutting greenhouse gas emissions and preventing the devastating damage that the scientific community was sure would come?

Let me be very clear. The issue that we are dealing with today is not political. It has nothing to do with Democrats, Republicans, Independents and all of the political squabbling we see here every day. It has everything to do with physics. The leading scientists in the world who study climate change now tell us that their projections in the past were wrong. That, in fact, the crisis facing our planet is much more serious than they had previously believed. They now tell us that if we continue along our merry path, where 12 out of the last 15 years were the warmest on record, and take no decisive action in transforming our energy system and cutting greenhouse gas emissions, this planet could be 8 degrees Fahrenheit or more warmer than is currently the case.

And what would that mean to planet Earth? It would mean sea levels rising by 3 to 6 feet which would flood cities like New Orleans, or Boston, or Miami – making them uninhabitable. And this would be true

for coastal communities all over the world. It would mean that every year we would see more and more extreme weather disturbances, like Hurricanes Irene and Sandy - costing taxpayers tens of billions of dollars every year and resulting in devastating blows to our economy and productive capabilities.

We would see the price of food rising, because crops in the United States and around the world would be unable to grow in temperatures substantially higher than they are right now. It would mean greater threats of war and international instability because hungry and thirsty people would be fighting for limited resources. It would mean more disease and unnecessary deaths.

The legislation that Senator Boxer and I are introducing today with the support of some of the leading environmental organizations in the country can actually address the crisis and does what has to be done to protect the planet. It can reverse greenhouse gas emissions in a significant way. It can create millions of jobs as we transform our energy system away from fossil fuel and into energy efficiency and such sustainably energies as wind, solar, geothermal and biomass.

A major focus of this legislation is a price on carbon and methane emissions. This fee on the largest fossil fuel polluters affects less than 3,000 entities nationwide but covers 85 percent of U.S. greenhouse gas emissions according to the Congressional Research Service. This legislation ends the fossil fuel subsidies, and protects communities by

requiring that fracking operations comply with the Safe Drinking Water Act and disclose chemicals they use.

To protect families from fossil fuel companies jacking up prices, 60 percent of the carbon fee revenue will be rebated, per capita, to every legal U.S. resident.

To protect U.S. manufacturers, this legislation includes a border fee on imported fuels and products, unless the nation shipping them already has their own similar carbon price. That ensures a level playing field for U.S. businesses, while creating an incentive for international cooperation.

To transform our energy system, this legislation makes the boldest ever investment in energy efficiency and sustainable energy. That includes weatherizing 1 million homes a year as President Obama called for previously. It means tripling the budget for ARPA-E to do advanced research, and investing hundreds of billions through incentives and a public-private Sustainable Technologies Fund focusing on energy efficiency, solar and wind and geothermal and biomass, and clean transportation technology. We also provide funds to train workers for jobs in the sustainable energy economy. We provide funds to help communities become resilient in the face of extreme weather, and we pay down the debt by roughly \$300 billion over ten years.

We have the opportunity right now, with the President's commitment in the State of the Union, to make progress. The President can and must use his authority to cut down on power plant pollution, and reject the dangerous Keystone XL project. But he cannot give up on a comprehensive legislative solution, and neither can we. We will never fully deal with this crisis until Congress passes strong legislation. Senator Boxer and I are going to fight as hard as we can to do that, and we will work to rally support from American families all across this country that care deeply about their children and grandchildren's future, and want to protect them from this planetary crisis.