



Northeast Tennessee Cooperation Circle



Living our faiths, greening our world.

Religious Leaders of East Tennessee Urge Senator Bob Corker To Act Now to Prevent Nuclear War and Protect the Climate

In the name of all that is holy and all that is hoped, we religious leaders, united by the belief that Earth is sacred and by our calling to protect the divine masterpiece of Creation, especially the poor:

- **Warn that IT IS TWO MINUTES TO MIDNIGHT – i.e., human civilization is at its greatest risk from nuclear war and climate catastrophe since the end of World War II;**
- **Urge support for S.200, the “Restricting First Use of Nuclear Weapons Act of 2017”, to establish the policy of No First Use;**
- **Believe that higher temperatures are contributing to the extinction of animal and plant species and that rising sea levels are making areas of the world unfit for habitation;**
- **Encourage adoption of revenue-neutral carbon fee and dividend legislation to avert catastrophic global warming;**
- **Insist that resources spent on producing, stockpiling and deploying nuclear weapons be dedicated to feeding and housing the poor and to education and health care; and**
- **Fear that nuclear weapons will be used by the United States as tools of aggression.**

By adding our names to the sign-on letter, a choir of over three dozen religious voices together calls on Senator Bob Corker to prioritize the prevention of nuclear war and protection of the climate in his last months in office.

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April 24, 2018

The Honorable Bob Corker
United States Senate
1105 East Jackson Blvd., Suite 4
Jonesborough, TN 37659

HAND DELIVERED

RE: IT IS TWO MINUTES TO MIDNIGHT

Dear Senator Corker:

As clergy and as lay leaders in Northeast Tennessee religious communities, we are compelled by our beliefs to defend Creation – especially the poor – from man-made existential threats. Because we believe that God is in every person and that the use of nuclear weapons is an abhorrent devaluation of the lives and humanity of people at home and abroad, we consider these weapons wholly immoral. Further, we challenge the moral legitimacy of security strategies that rely on nuclear weapons. We also find it unacceptable that the threat that climate change poses to our common home and to the lives and futures of all people – including our fellow citizens in Puerto Rico – is not a priority of federal action.

Therefore, we are writing to you now with a sense of utmost urgency to encourage you to work with us for the common good and to make the prevention of nuclear war and the protection of the climate your highest priorities in your last months in office.

The urgent threat of nuclear war caused the *Bulletin of Atomic Scientists* to set the Doomsday Clock to TWO MINUTES TO MIDNIGHT

We are alarmed by a nuclear posture that seeks new warheads, that argues for fielding “usable” smaller-yield nuclear weapons, and that devises a strategy that lowers the nuclear war threshold through the integration of nuclear forces with the military’s conventional arms. The rejection of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty which has 183 signatories around the globe and the reported plans to ready the Nevada Test Site for the resumption of nuclear weapons testing also concern us. Further, we challenge the assertion in the 2018 Nuclear Posture Review that “flexible and secure nuclear capabilities” are “an affordable priority”.

Instead, we believe that priority should be given to diplomacy and restraint, to disarmament and development and agree with Pope Francis' message to the Conference on the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons:

“Spending on nuclear weapons squanders the wealth of nations. To prioritize such spending is a mistake and a misallocation of resources which would be far better invested in the areas of integral human development, education, health and the fight against extreme poverty. When these resources are squandered, the poor...pay the price.”

In solidarity with the poor, we must insist that our country abide by the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and abandon the profligate plan to modernize and expand America's nuclear arsenal. As you might recall, the national organizations of our congregations united in their opposition to Complex Transformation in 2007 and argued that Congress should redirect the then-anticipated multi-billion-dollar expenditure to life-affirming programs. A decade later, a minimum of \$1.25 trillion are forecast to be spent on weapons that should never be used. Some even expect that the final cost of modernization could reach \$4 trillion.

Considering our Article VI obligation under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty “to pursue negotiations in good faith...relating to cessation of the nuclear arms race”, we are concerned that our country is instead engaging in an arms race rather than working toward disarmament. We also call for ratification of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons which already has 58 signatories and 7 ratifications.

Abiding by our treaty obligations, continuing the moratorium on nuclear weapons tests, engaging Russia in a new round of arms-reduction talks, working for disarmament – these are the pathways to peace that will bring a lasting and just security. Additionally, keeping America in the Iran Nuclear Deal is imperative not only because the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action is working, but also because (as our brother and sister Quakers point out) pulling out of the Iran deal could eliminate any chance for a negotiated reduction of tensions with North Korea which would view the US as untrustworthy if the Iran Deal is abrogated.

In the short term, however, America must adopt a no-first-use policy to reduce the risk of nuclear war. Specifically, we urge you to co-sponsor S.200, the “Restricting First Use of Nuclear Weapons Act”, which needs your support to achieve a majority vote in the Foreign Relations Committee and the US Senate. This legislation would require a Declaration of War by the Congress before any president could legally order the first use of nuclear weapons in a conflict.

Arguments in favor of a no-first-use policy were made to the previous administration by a number of your fellow Senators, as well as other nuclear policy experts. Their message of restraint is even more urgent now: we must reduce the risk of nuclear war by declaring that the US will not use nuclear weapons as tools of aggression.

The Olympic games have opened up a space for dialog between North and South Korea. Now the world needs American statesmen to do their part so that diplomatic

solutions for the Korean Peninsula can be advanced even further. We believe that restricting first-use of nuclear weapons will advance the cause of peace and help prevent nuclear war.

Climate change's looming threat to humanity also caused the *Bulletin* to reset the Doomsday Clock to TWO MINUTES TO MIDNIGHT.

Our churches, mosques, synagogues, temples and meetings have been working for years to reduce our communities' impacts on the environment. Some of our places of worship are even "Cool Congregations" – saving Creation and our energy expenses at the same time. But more can and must be done within our religious organizations and in the halls of Congress to reverse the earth's warming trend and keep temperatures from tipping the climate into even more damaging and deadly chaos.

Like our Presbyterian brothers and sisters, we stand with the poor of present and future generations who are often the victims of environmental injustice and upon whom the impact of global warming falls disproportionately. Further, we agree that federal legislation be advanced

“that will internalize the social and environmental costs related to greenhouse gas emissions and impose a price on carbon”.

Specifically, our tangible hope leads us to encourage you to endorse a carbon-fee-and-dividend policy such as proposed by the Climate Leadership Council of Republican elder statesmen and, similarly, by the non-partisan Citizens' Climate Lobby (CCL). The elegant carbon-pricing plan of these national groups would return all fees to the public. It has a very strong potential to cut US greenhouse gas emissions in half within two decades while stimulating the economy and spurring further international adoption of carbon fees. Pricing carbon must be done soon to reduce the demand for fossil fuels, to advance the further spread of non-carbon energy, and to offset recent adverse actions on climate by our federal government.

IT IS NOW TWO MINUTES TO MIDNIGHT because American and other world leaders have failed to act responsibly to the threats of nuclear war and climate change.

It is our fervent prayer that you recognize, as we do, the sanctity of Creation and that you do everything in your power to bring us back from the brink of nuclear and climate catastrophe.

In the Name of all that is holy and all that is hoped, we thank you for serious consideration of our requests and for your reply to:

**East Tennessee Religious Leaders for Peace and Climate Protection
c/o Green Interfaith Network Incorporated (GINI)
P.O. Box 4293
Johnson City, TN 37602.**

Sincerely,

MEMBERS OF THE CLERGY

Rev. Jeff Briere, Minister Holston Valley Unitarian Universalist Church, Johnson City
Rev. Lee Clements, Presbyterian Church (USA), Jonesborough
Father Michael Dakotah, St. Timothy's Catholic Apostolic Church, Elizabethton
Rev. Vance P. Davis, Ph.D., Mental Health Chaplain (retired), Knoxville
Rev. Timothy Holder, St. Thomas Episcopal Church, Elizabethton
Rev. Peter Iorio, Past President United Religions Initiative (URI) Northeast Tennessee Cooperation Circle and Pastor St. Mary's Catholic Church. Johnson City
Rev. Deven Hazelwood Johnson, Presbyterian Church (USA), Johnson City
Rev. Michael Lester, Associate Pastor Munsey Memorial United Methodist Church, Johnson City
Rev. Dr. Calvin W. Ross, M.Div., Th.M., Ph.D.
Rabbi Arthur Rutberg, President United Religions Initiative (URI) Northeast Tennessee Cooperation Circle and Rabbi, B'Nai Sholom Congregation, Bristol
Rev. Alpha Sanon, Christian Methodist Episcopal (CME) Church
Imam Dr. Fereidoon Shafiej, President Muslim Community of Northeast Tennessee, Johnson City
Rev. Debbie Shields, M.Div. BCC, Senior Chaplain Ballad Health, Johnson City
Rev. SuzeAnne Silla, St. John's Episcopal Church, Johnson City

LAY LEADERS OF RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES

Professor Leila Al-Imad, Ph.D., Vice President URI Northeast Tennessee Cooperation Circle, Johnson City
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Chaplain Pat Griggs, RN, CNM, Unitarian Universalist Association
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Carol Transou, Church and Society Member Munsey Memorial United Methodist Church, Johnson City

115TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

S. 200

To prohibit the conduct of a first-use nuclear strike absent a declaration of war by Congress.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

JANUARY 24, 2017

Mr. MARKEY introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Foreign Relations

A BILL

To prohibit the conduct of a first-use nuclear strike absent a declaration of war by Congress.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Restricting First Use
5 of Nuclear Weapons Act of 2017”.

6 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS AND DECLARATION OF POLICY.**

7 (a) FINDINGS.—Congress finds the following:

8 (1) The Constitution gives Congress the sole
9 power to declare war.

1 (2) The framers of the Constitution understood
2 that the monumental decision to go to war, which
3 can result in massive death and the destruction of
4 civilized society, must be made by the representa-
5 tives of the people and not by a single person.

6 (3) As stated by section 2(c) of the War Powers
7 Resolution (Public Law 93–148; 50 U.S.C. 1541),
8 “the constitutional powers of the President as Com-
9 mander-in-Chief to introduce United States Armed
10 Forces into hostilities, or into situations where im-
11 minent involvement in hostilities is clearly indicated
12 by the circumstances, are exercised only pursuant to
13 (1) a declaration of war, (2) specific statutory au-
14 thorization, or (3) a national emergency created by
15 attack upon the United States, its territories or pos-
16 sessions, or its armed forces”.

17 (4) Nuclear weapons are uniquely powerful
18 weapons that have the capability to instantly kill
19 millions of people, create long-term health and envi-
20 ronmental consequences throughout the world, di-
21 rectly undermine global peace, and put the United
22 States at existential risk from retaliatory nuclear
23 strikes.

1 (5) By any definition of war, a first-use nuclear
2 strike from the United States would constitute a
3 major act of war.

4 (6) A first-use nuclear strike conducted absent
5 a declaration of war by Congress would violate the
6 Constitution.

7 (b) DECLARATION OF POLICY.—It is the policy of the
8 United States that no first-use nuclear strike should be
9 conducted absent a declaration of war by Congress.

10 **SEC. 3. PROHIBITION ON CONDUCT OF FIRST-USE NU-**
11 **CLEAR STRIKES.**

12 (a) PROHIBITION.—Notwithstanding any other provi-
13 sion of law, the President may not use the Armed Forces
14 of the United States to conduct a first-use nuclear strike
15 unless such strike is conducted pursuant to a declaration
16 of war by Congress that expressly authorizes such strike.

17 (b) FIRST-USE NUCLEAR STRIKE DEFINED.—In this
18 section, the term “first-use nuclear strike” means an at-
19 tack using nuclear weapons against an enemy that is con-
20 ducted without the President determining that the enemy
21 has first launched a nuclear strike against the United
22 States or an ally of the United States.

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Legislative proposal: Carbon Fee and Dividend

Findings:

1. Causation: Whereas the weight of scientific evidence indicates that greenhouse gas emissions from human activities including the burning of fossil fuels and other sources are causing rising global temperatures,
2. Mitigation (Return to 350 ppm or below): Whereas the weight of scientific evidence also indicates that a return from the current concentration of more than 400 parts per million ("ppm") of carbon dioxide ("CO₂") in the atmosphere to 350 ppm CO₂ or less is necessary to slow or stop the rise in global temperatures,
3. Endangerment: Whereas further increases in global temperatures pose imminent and substantial dangers to human health, the natural environment, the economy, national security, and an unacceptable risk of catastrophic impacts to human civilization,
4. Co-Benefits: Whereas the measures proposed in this legislation will benefit the economy, human health, the environment, and national security, even without consideration of global temperatures, as a result of correcting market distortions, reductions in non-greenhouse-gas pollutants, reducing the outflow of dollars to oil-producing countries and improvements in the energy security of the United States,
5. Benefits of Carbon Fees: Whereas phased-in carbon fees on greenhouse gas emissions (1) are the most efficient, transparent, and enforceable mechanism to drive an effective and fair transition to a domestic-energy economy, (2) will stimulate investment in alternative-energy technologies, and (3) give all businesses powerful incentives to increase their energy-efficiency and reduce their carbon footprints in order to remain competitive,
6. Equal Monthly Per-Person Dividends: Whereas equal monthly dividends (or "rebates") from carbon fees paid to every American household can help ensure that families and individuals can afford the energy they need during the transition to a greenhouse gas-free economy and the dividends will stimulate the economy,

Therefore the following legislation is hereby enacted:

1. Collection of Carbon Fees/Carbon Fee Trust Fund: Upon enactment, impose a carbon fee on all fossil fuels and other greenhouse gases at the point where they first enter the economy. The fee shall be collected by the Treasury Department. The fee on that date shall be \$15 per ton of CO₂ equivalent emissions and result in equal charges for each ton of CO₂ equivalent emissions potential in each type of fuel or greenhouse gas. The Department of Energy shall propose and promulgate regulations setting forth CO₂ equivalent fees for other greenhouse gases including at a minimum methane, nitrous oxide, sulfur hexafluoride, hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs), perfluorocarbons, and nitrogen trifluoride. The Treasury shall also collect the fees imposed upon the other greenhouse gases. All fees are to be placed in the Carbon Fees Trust Fund and rebated to American households as outlined in #3 below.
2. Emissions Reduction Targets: To align US emissions with the physical constraints identified by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) to avoid irreversible climate change, the yearly increase in carbon fees including other greenhouse gases, shall be at least \$10 per ton of CO₂ equivalent each year. Annually, the Department of Energy shall determine whether an increase larger than \$10 per ton per year is needed to achieve program goals. Yearly price increases of at least \$10 per year shall continue until total U.S. CO₂-equivalent emissions have been reduced to 10% of U.S. CO₂-equivalent emissions in 1990.



3. Equal Per-Person Monthly Dividend Payments: Equal monthly per-person dividend payments shall be made to all American households ($\frac{1}{2}$ payment per child under 18 years old, with a limit of 2 children per family) each month. The total value of all monthly dividend payments shall represent 100% of the net carbon fees collected per month.

4. Border Adjustments: In order to ensure there is no domestic or international incentive to relocate production of goods or services to regimes more permissive of greenhouse gas emissions, and thus encourage lower global emissions, Carbon-Fee-Equivalent Tariffs shall be charged for goods entering the U.S. from countries without comparable Carbon Fees/Carbon Pricing. Carbon-Fee-Equivalent Rebates shall be used to reduce the price of exports to such countries. The State Department will determine rebate amounts and exemptions if any.