

March 09, 2007

Towns can influence warming policy

Beginning next week, residents in more than 100 towns across the state of New Hampshire will go to Town Meeting to vote on a wide range of issues, from the town budget to a resolution calling for a reduction of greenhouse gas emissions -- and faster, more substantial climate change action on the part of the U.S. government.

Should towns consider deliberating, debating and voting on an issue that would appear to be better left for Congress and Executive Branch agencies?

We say yes; they can if they choose. After all, this is a democracy, and voting on the budget for a new fire truck or public library addition does not preclude making a statement on climate change.

The potential impact of global warming will likely not discriminate between global and local concerns -- the possible catastrophic effect of rising seas will affect towns across the New Hampshire coast as much as Bangladesh, which has had its coldest winter in almost four decades. If models prove even remotely accurate, the ecosystem of this South Asian country could be devastated by rising seas caused by global climate change.

For naysayers who believe it's a waste of time for local voters to speak out about climate change, it's worth remembering the same sentiments more than two decades ago when acid rain was the issue and Congress was stuck in research and policy inaction. More than 190 towns in 1983 made their collective voices heard through the ballot, and that helped lead to a major political shift about acid rain -- and, according to the New Hampshire-based Carbon Coalition, which is pushing the current initiative, it has led to a one-third reduction in sulfur emissions.

The reality is that this level of local activity wouldn't have occurred had the federal government not abandoned climate change policy by putting up a smokescreen of obstruction.

Citizens here and across the country are rightfully frustrated about excessive rhetoric, bureaucratic atrophy and absurd leadership by politicians such as Sen. James Inhofe, R-Okla., the former environment committee chairman, who insists global warming is a "liberal hoax" and blames the news media for creating global warming "environmental alarmism."

Let the voters of New Hampshire speak up and determine what's alarmist and what's not.

-- The Exeter News-Letter