



# Curbing Global Warming

Curbing the devastating effects of global warming is the most urgent challenge of our time. Scientists project that if human activities continue to produce harmful heat-trapping gases—like carbon dioxide—in “business as usual” amounts, the Earth will experience higher sea levels, extreme weather conditions, massive species extinction, and large-scale disease increases. We’re already seeing the impacts, but to avoid the worst effects of global warming, the United States will need to reduce its emissions by about 2% per year to reach a goal of about 60-80% reductions by mid-century.

The U.S. has the resolve and the technology needed to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions. Individual states are already taking steps to adopt mandatory caps on emissions, renewable electricity standards, and higher vehicle efficiency standards. What we now need is the political will—at a federal level—to set reductions in motion. It is past time for Congressional action!

## Comprehensive Global Warming Bills

Legislation that would put the U.S. on the right path to reducing emissions, create jobs, help consumers make the transition to a low-carbon economy has been introduced in the Senate and House of Representatives in the 110th Congress and similar efforts are expected when Congress returns in January 2009 to form the 111th Congress. The current effort to address global warming is through a cap and trade system that would cap emissions. The cap is slowly lowered with the goal of reducing emissions by 80% by 2050. In addition to a cap and trade program, a nationwide renewable electricity standard, higher fuel economy for vehicles and energy conservation are important to reducing global warming pollution.

## Renewable Electricity Standards

A renewable electricity standard (RES) is a market-based mechanism that requires utility companies to gradually

increase the portion of electricity produced from renewable resources such as wind and solar energy or to purchase credits from other participating utilities. Twenty-five states have already passed their own RES. Federal legislation should require electric utilities to acquire 20% of their electricity from wind, solar, and other renewable energy sources by 2020.

## Vehicle Fuel Efficiency

Cars and light trucks account for 20% of greenhouse gas emissions. Improving vehicle fuel efficiency standards is a critical component in combating global warming. Congress recently passed legislation that would raise fuel economy to 35 mpg by 2018 and would mandate that automakers improve fuel economy by 4% per year after 2018, unless technologically unachievable. However, much more could be done to increase fuel economy and provide other transit options.

## Energy Efficiency

Energy efficiency is by far the easiest, quickest and cheapest way to reduce energy and curb global warming emissions. There are abundant opportunities to save 70% to 90% of the energy and cost for lighting, fan, and pump systems; 50% for electric motors; and 60% in areas such as heating, cooling, office equipment, and appliances. In general, up to 75% of the electricity used in the U.S. today could be saved with efficiency measures that cost less than the electricity itself.\* Federal polices can do much to encourage energy efficiency and innovation.

**We still have time** to turn around the climate crisis, if we adopt strong policies to immediately reduce global warming pollution. Call your Senators and Representative today to urge them to support efforts to reduce global warming pollution 80% by 2050. You can reach all Congressional offices through the Congressional switchboard, 202-224-3121.

Stay informed by joining Audubon Action Network. Go to [www.audubonaction.org](http://www.audubonaction.org) to sign up.

\*Source: The Rocky Mountain Institute (RMI), an organization in the United States dedicated to research, publication, consulting, and lecturing in the general field of sustainability, with a special focus on profitable innovations for energy and resource efficiency.