

R-2: ELCA Advocacy Support for the Energy Innovation and Carbon Dividend Act

WHEREAS, God created heaven and earth and everything therein and proclaimed it good (Gen 1:1ff); and God has entrusted humankind with the care of the earth (Gen 2:15); and

WHEREAS, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America has adopted social policy statements, “Caring for Creation” (1993) and “Sufficient, Sustainable Livelihood” (1999) that call for economic and environmental justice, to protect the health and integrity of creation both for its own sake and for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations, and for economic justice, to consider how our actions affect the ability of all people to provide for their material needs and the needs of their families and communities; and

WHEREAS, in 1993 with the Caring for Creation social statement, we realized the urgency was already “widespread and serious, according to the preponderance of evidence from scientists worldwide [of] dangerous global warming, caused by the buildup of greenhouse gases, especially carbon dioxide” from the burning of fossil fuels, and that “action to counter degradation, especially within this decade, is essential to the future of our children and our children’s children. Time is very short;” and

WHEREAS, carbon pricing is one policy tool to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from fossil fuel combustion, which complements other tools like regulations on polluting industries and tax incentives encouraging investment in energy efficiency and renewable forms of energy production; and

WHEREAS, in January 2019, over 3,500 of our nation’s leading economists across the political spectrum, including 28 Nobel Laureates and 4 former chairs of the Federal Reserve, issued a joint “Economists’ Statement on Carbon Dividends” that argued “A carbon tax offers the most cost-effective lever to reduce carbon emissions at the scale and speed that is necessary,” but also recommended “the revenue should be returned directly to U.S. citizens through equal lump-sum rebates,” and concluded “The majority of American families, including the most vulnerable, will benefit financially by receiving more in ‘carbon dividends’ than they pay in increased energy prices;”¹ and

WHEREAS, in 2019 the Churchwide Assembly received with gratitude a memorial from the South-Central Synod of Wisconsin regarding a Carbon Fee and Dividend, and the Church Council directed the Domestic Mission unit to develop “a plan that promotes educational resources on Carbon Fee and Dividend to assist in forming the basis for any potential advocacy strategy;”² and

¹ Climate Leadership Council, [“Economists Statement on Carbon Dividends,”](#) January 17, 2019.

² [Report of Actions of the Church Council \(November 12-14, 2020\).](#)

WHEREAS, in October 2019 ELCA Advocacy published a primer on “Carbon Pricing Basics” that provides an overview to the topic and identifies several principles rooted in ELCA social statements that should be used to assess carbon pricing proposals;³ and

WHEREAS, the “Energy Innovation and Carbon Dividend Act of 2019”⁴ has received bipartisan support in the last two sessions in Congress and is consistent with the principles outlined in ELCA Advocacy’s “Carbon Pricing Basics;” and

WHEREAS, ELCA Advocacy does advocate for particular pieces of legislation after careful review and moral grounding in the ELCA’s social statements;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Northern Illinois Synod urge ELCA Advocacy to advocate for the Energy Innovation and Carbon Dividend Act, or similar legislation during the 117th United States Congress and, if necessary, future Congresses; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the congregations in our synod be encouraged to utilize “Carbon Pricing Basics” in adult education opportunities, and that the Creation Care Committee be directed to provide a synod wide study of the same document; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Northern Illinois Synod Council receive this resolution at their next meeting and forward it to the ELCA Church Council or its Executive Committee for further action by directing ELCA Advocacy to advocate for the Energy Innovation and Carbon Dividend Act or similar legislation.

Contact Persons: Rev. Scott Ralston, Rev. Jeff Schlesinger, Rev. Michel Clark

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Action of the Resolution Committee: Recommend Adoption of the Resolution

Date of Action: May 1, 2021

³ ELCA Advocacy, [“Carbon Pricing Basics.”](#) October 2019.

⁴ [H.R. 763, Energy Innovation and Carbon Dividend Act of 2019.](#)

Northern Illinois Synod

Anticipated Synod Implementation Analysis

(Please attach this resource impact reporting form to each Resolution submitted)

Resolution Title: ELCA Advocacy Support for the Energy Innovation and Carbon Dividend Act

Anticipated Financial Implications of resolution if adopted for:

Synod Organization: None

Congregations: None

Anticipated staff or personnel implications of resolution if adopted for:

Synod Organization: This resolution does not compel the synod staff or personnel of the committee to spend time unless they choose to be involved with the Creation Care Committee's synod-wide program/class on Carbon Pricing Basics.

Congregations: It is totally up to individuals and congregations whether to participate in the opportunities that will be made available to them.
