

# **Citizens addressing our Changing Climate: Save money and the environment by joining the energy future**

To learn about recent advances in climate and energy policies, all are invited to hear CCL member Brett Cease speak at 5:30 p.m. on Thursday, April 18, in Beltrami Electric's community room.

**By Patrick Welle, Citizens' Climate Lobby**

Are you interested in reducing your electricity bill and polluting less? The Inflation Reduction Act offers new rebates and tax credits for switching to cutting-edge electricity options and energy efficiency that can help our pocketbooks and the environment.

We have a tremendous opportunity to learn about recent advances in climate and energy policies. Bemidji's homegrown expert, Brett Cease will be speaking at 5:30 p.m. on Thursday, April 18, in the Beltrami Electric Community Room.

He is recognized nationally in his role as the vice president of programs with the Citizens' Climate Lobby. All are invited to learn about joining the energy future and ways you and the environment can benefit.

Heat pumps are a major option in this transition to a better energy future. The transfer of hot and cold by air-source heat pumps consumes half to a third of the energy of furnaces that burn fossil fuels to create heat. And using groundwater for heat transfer is even more efficient because it typically ranges around 50 degrees.

Experts observe that some people are making the switch for cost savings, others are primarily motivated to help the environment and many people want both.

The IRA is designed to move us to an energy economy that is both cheaper and better for the planet. As a volunteer with CCL, I understand that economic incentives can motivate more

sustainable choices. The IRA provides subsidies to households — and rewards utilities — to encourage the adoption of these improved technologies.

While the IRA will take us part of the way to a cleaner energy future, CCL advocates further policies to achieve the full transition. CCL supports policies that will build the lower-carbon economy in the most cost-effective and fiscally responsible manner. Subsidies for conservation and cleaner energy alternatives increase government debt.

While handing off debt would ultimately be less burdensome to our children and grandchildren than handing off a less livable planet, it would be wrong to allow either outcome to bankrupt their futures. The economic evidence is overwhelming that the environmental and social costs of the emerging climate crisis, if left unaddressed, will be far worse than the costs of solving the problem.

It will be too cumbersome and expensive to achieve the transition entirely through government subsidies. CCL favors market-based incentives that induce polluters to pay some of the costs of reducing their pollution. This “polluters-pay” idea has been widely popular with the public for decades.

It has become painfully clear that society is suffering from worsening extreme weather patterns — storms, floods, droughts, wildfires, etc. If we don’t hold polluters accountable, the rest of us are victims of the damages they cause.

CCL advocates for the Energy Innovation Act, which is before the U.S. Congress. It would charge fees for carbon pollution from industries and return the revenues as equal, per capita dividends to Americans. This policy has broad support among economists with more than 3,600 economists signing [“the Economists’ Statement on Carbon Dividends.”](#)

Key principles are:

1. “A carbon tax offers the most cost-effective lever to reduce carbon emissions at the scale and speed that is necessary . . . to steer economic actors towards a low-carbon future.”
2. “A consistently rising carbon price will encourage technological innovation and large-scale infrastructure development. It will also accelerate the diffusion of carbon-efficient goods and services.”
3. “Substituting a price signal for cumbersome regulations will promote economic growth and provide the regulatory certainty companies need for long-term investment in clean-energy alternatives.”
4. “To protect U.S. competitiveness, a border carbon adjustment system should be established. This system would enhance the competitiveness of American firms that are more energy-

efficient than their global competitors. It would also create an incentive for other nations to adopt similar carbon pricing.”

5. “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.”

Many of our closest trading partners have already adopted carbon pricing. To promote fair trade (see item four above), these countries are also implementing carbon border adjustment mechanisms (CBAM) that charge import tariffs on goods manufactured in other countries with higher carbon pollution.

There is growing interest among U.S. policymakers to adopt CBAM so that markets reflect the fact that so much of U.S. manufacturing is already cleaner than that of imports. Because CBAM captures environmental costs, it is the type of tariff on imports that complies with the rules of international trade.

It would level the playing field so U.S. industries can compete with Chinese goods that are artificially cheap. Imagine a future in which Minnesota forest and steel-related industries lead the world in low-carbon production processes under fair carbon fees and border adjustments.

Canada implemented carbon fees a couple of years ago to fund the Canada Carbon Rebate. Analysis shows the vast majority of Canadians are receiving more in carbon rebates than they pay in increased energy prices (see item five above). All households can save money by reducing their carbon footprints.

We can start building a cheaper and more sustainable energy future today. Please join us on April 18 to learn how.

*Patrick Welle is a member of the Citizens' Climate Lobby organization. For more information, visit [CitizensClimateLobby.org](https://CitizensClimateLobby.org).*