

Baptist ministers urge passage of climate-change bill

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NASHVILLE, Tenn. (ABP) — A total of 140 moderate Baptist leaders signed a June 18 letter urging passage of a comprehensive energy bill that includes caps on emissions linked to global warming.

Drafted by the Baptist Center for Ethics, a Cooperative Baptist Fellowship partner organization, the [letter](#) asks members of Congress to strengthen and pass "The American Clean Energy and Security Act," expected to make its way before Congress in coming weeks.

National, regional and local Baptist church leaders from 26 states and the District of Columbia said the bill sponsored by Reps. Henry Waxman (D-Calif.) and Edward Markey (D-Mass.) "advances practically the moral demands to care for the earth and its poorest inhabitants."

The 932-page [act](#) numbered H.R. 2454, also called the Waxman-Markey bill, includes a cap-and-trade global warming reduction plan designed to reduce economy-wide greenhouse gas emissions 17 percent by 2020.

The sponsors [say](#) it would create jobs, help end American dependence on foreign oil and combat global warming.

Republicans and some conservative Democrats say the bill is nothing more than an energy tax that would drive up costs and hurt the economy. Environmentalist groups say its goals are too modest and it makes too many concessions to energy companies.

Signers of the Baptist letter said they wished the legislation provided more funding for marginalized people most at risk and least responsible for

climate change, but they are "determined that the tyranny of moral perfectionism will not block the urgency of moral realism."

Robert Parham, executive director of the Baptist Center for Ethics, endorsed the bill in a May 28 [editorial](#) on the BCE website EthicsDaily.com.

"Our faith calls us to care for creation and the poor in the concrete, not in the abstract," Parham wrote. "Protecting the environment protects the marginalized. One realistic step toward protecting both is supporting the House climate bill."

Last year the BCE [sent](#) a similar pastoral letter urging passage of climate-change legislation sponsored by Sens. John Warner (R-Va.) and Joseph Lieberman (ID-Conn.) that stalled in the Senate.

National Baptist leaders signing the June 18 letter included Daniel Vestal, executive coordinator of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship; CBF moderator Jack Glasgow; Roy Medley, general secretary of American Baptist Churches-USA; William Shaw, president of National Baptist Convention USA, Inc.; and David Emmanuel Goatley, executive secretary-treasurer of the Lott Carey Baptist Foreign Mission Convention.

State CBF leaders in Alabama, Georgia, North Carolina and South Carolina signed the letter. So did Molly Marshall, president of Central Baptist Theological Seminary in Shawnee, Kan.; Jim Hill, executive director of the Baptist General Convention of Missouri; and Bruce Prescott, executive director of Mainstream Oklahoma Baptists.

Signers also included Miguel De La Torre, a professor at Iliff School of Theology, who writes regularly for Associated Baptist Press.

The letter comes on the heels of a government [report](#) predicting dire economic and quality-of-life consequences from global warming unless greenhouse gas emissions are curbed sharply.

Republicans accused the Obama administration of fear-mongering in order to boost support for the Democratic-sponsored energy bill.

-Bob Allen is senior writer for Associated Baptist Press.