NATIONAL CATHOLIC REPORTER
Published on *National Catholic Reporter* (http://ncronline.org)

Editorial: Step up pressure on candidates to act on climate

NCR Editorial Staff | Oct. 1, 2012
Editorial

Early in the presidential race both candidates seemed to have noted studies suggesting that reducing carbon emissions to slow global climate change ranks close to the bottom of voters? concerns. Both Mitt Romney and Barack Obama had apparently taken direction from this perceived indifference, even as much of the nation suffered through extremes of drought and heat this summer.

Obama?s cap-and-trade legislation failed under heavy Republican criticism early last year. Ever since, Obama has avoided mentioning climate change in public. That changed with his speech concluding the Democratic National Convention when he proclaimed that global climate change is neither a joke nor a hoax, drawing a clear contrast with his opponent. A change of direction, or was he merely telling Democrats what he thought they wanted to hear?

Romney?s quip comparing his concern for the immediate needs of American families with Obama?s wanting ?to slow the growth of the oceans? notwithstanding, Obama?s energy strategy has largely been one of profligate drilling. With the notable exception of raising auto and truck fuel efficiency standards and some moves to promote wind, solar and battery energy enterprises, he has proposed minimal steps to curtail carbon emissions, and then undermined them by caving in to the oil industries, including a recent decision to allow drilling off Alaska?s coast.

His administration has retreated from the 2-degree goal (keeping the global average temperature from rising more than 2 degrees Celsius) in international negotiations on climate change.

Calling it ?clean coal,? Obama has allowed the continuation of hydrofracking and mountaintop mining -- real threats to the ecosystem and health that add to the fossil fuel consumption that?s pumping greenhouse gases into the atmosphere.

A new study from the Yale Project on Climate Change Communication and George Mason University found that a significant majority of voters say they?ll take a candidate?s position on global climate change into account while voting. The study found that voters who believe climate change is happening outnumber deniers 10 to one.

The change in attitude may be a consequence of this summer?s parched, sweltering weather. The study implies that aggressive action is probably a political winner.

A sluggish economy and high unemployment must be on the presidential front burner. However, public opinion seems to have reached a tipping point. We understand that if emissions trends continue unchecked, global temperatures will rise 6 degrees Celsius by 2100. ?Even schoolchildren know this will have catastrophic implications,? says the International Energy Agency?s chief economist Fatih Birol.

?The destruction of the environment should not be a partisan issue,? says Patrick Carolan, director of the Franciscan Action Network, which has called on both candidates to outline their plan for dealing with climate

change. ?Climate change is about our responsibility as God?s children and people of faith to care for each other and for future generations by caring for all of God?s wondrous creation. ... The U.S. Catholic Conference of Bishops, Pope Benedict XVI and many other faith leaders have acknowledged the science and have identified climate change as a serious moral issue that requires an immediate response.?

A Romney win on Nov. 6 will mean even more calamitous delay on strenuous action to curtail emissions. Obama?s re-election means that concerned citizens everywhere must step up the pressure on his administration to act aggressively on his convention speech commitment.

Source URL (retrieved on *02/08/2016 - 15:34*): http://ncronline.org/news/editorial-step-pressure-candidates-act-climate