

## The Register-Guard

<http://www.registerguard.com/>

---

### Solution starts with a national climate summit

---

**BY BOB DOPPELT**

*For The Register-Guard*

**Published:** Today

---

President Obama's inaugural address was the best speech I've heard him make in a long time. That's because he finally acknowledged openly that our nation has a moral responsibility to future generations to address climate disruption.

It is not part of a "liberal" agenda. Climate disruption is not an ideological issue. It is a physics problem that can kill, injure or economically impair anyone, no matter what their political beliefs.

I might be overly optimistic, but the president seemed to make "responding to the threat of climate change" a core element of his final term in office. If he defines his policies on jobs, energy and other issues in terms of their capacity to resolve climate disruption, the economy will be strengthened and thousands of jobs can be created.

On the other hand, as shown by the \$100 billion-plus costs associated with Hurricane Sandy and last summer's historic drought, if the president fails to adopt a coherent and consistent approach to energy and the economy, rising climate impacts consistently will cost billions of dollars and undermine all hope of plentiful jobs and social well-being.

In addition, the president's call for "collective action" to address the problem was appropriate. We all contribute to climate disruption due to the energy we consume. We are all affected by climate change, and we must all be part of the solution.

I especially liked the fact that the president made climate disruption a challenge that "we the people" are ready for, and will win. That is incredibly important. Our nation has the know-how, skills, technologies and tools to address this problem. The president's optimistic, can-do perspective is exactly the tone needed to mobilize people to engage and succeed.

One way the president can demonstrate his commitment is to hold a solutions-focused kickoff national summit linked with action-planning satellite meetings in communities nationwide. This proposal has been submitted to the Obama administration by a diverse coalition of organizations. A rapidly growing number of current and former elected officials have endorsed the idea — including Eugene Mayor Kitty Piercy and leaders in such fields as business, farming, insurance, academia, the military and religion.

To make a fundamental change in thinking and practices, people and organizations must feel sufficiently high levels of dissonance, efficacy and benefits. Until recently, dissonance — the gap between where we want to be and where we are — about climate disruption in

the United States has been modest. However, last year's extreme weather events, topped by Hurricane Sandy, altered this.

Recent polls found that almost 70 percent of voters are now worried — that is, feel dissonance — about climate change. Election Day exit polls found that 60 percent of voters felt that climate change “made Sandy worse.”

Dissonance alone, however, is not enough to motivate change. People also must be confident that they have the know-how, skills and tools required to reduce the dissonance. And they must believe that the benefits of employing the tools are far greater than the costs.

Although dissonance has increased, the vast majority of Americans still doubt that we have the capacity to reduce climate disruption. A majority still lacks confidence that the benefits of acting far outweigh the costs.

A presidential summit that begins by describing the causes and effects of climate disruption, and then emphasizes proven solutions and their advantages, will build dissonance and increase the sense of efficacy and benefits that is needed to motivate people to address the problem. The associated satellite meetings would be organized by cities, counties, businesses, religious groups, civic organizations and other institutions. They would help create the shared sense of commitment and resolve required to engage in climate solutions over the long term.

Congress is not likely to enact climate protection legislation anytime soon. However, we can go a long way toward preparing for and building resilience to climate change, and reducing greenhouse gas emissions, if households, businesses, civic organizations, communities and states are motivated and engaged. That type of involvement eventually will circle back and put pressure on Congress to act.

The president made it clear that addressing climate disruption is now one of his top priorities. It must become a top priority for each of us in Lane County and across the nation.

We have the capacity to reduce global warming significantly. The benefits — cost savings, new businesses and jobs, better public health and more — are unbounded.

If we all engage actively in climate solutions, the next four years can be one of the most exciting periods in American history, with tremendous innovation and creative new ideas emerging at all levels of our society.

Let's rise to the challenge.

Bob Doppelt is executive director of the Resource Innovation Group, which is affiliated with the Center for Sustainable Communities at Willamette University, where he is also a senior fellow.

---

Copyright © 2013 — The Register-Guard, Eugene, Oregon, USA