



Background for Congressional District Visits: Climate Change

What's the issue?

Climate change changes everything. Greenhouse gas emissions are expected to fuel rising surface temperatures to dangerous levels throughout this century. Crippling heat waves and sporadic rains are predicted to occur more often and last longer, leading to more instances of drought. Extreme precipitation will grow more intense and frequent. Oceans will continue to warm and acidify, and the global mean sea level will rise, flooding cities and farmlands and threatening fresh water supplies. Three billion more lives will be placed at grave risk.

Climate change and poverty are closely intertwined. The people who suffer most from the disruption of natural systems are our brothers and sisters living in the poorest countries. Facing the loss of crops, livestock and income, their already fragile livelihoods are upturned by malnutrition, disease, and death.

What is the Church doing to help?

In his encyclical, "Laudato Si'" or "Praise Be to God," Pope Francis makes clear that our care for one another and our care for the Earth are intimately bound together. The Church calls on citizens to be stewards of God's creation, respectful and mindful of the fact that we depend on nature to survive. The pope's words lift up the moral dimensions of environmental degradation—and the suffering of those most vulnerable to the consequences of climate change. As Catholics, our faith calls us to care for all humankind, especially "these least brothers." (Matthew 25:40)

In response to that call, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops and Catholic Relief Services are urging our nation to adopt a national carbon emissions standard and to invest in the Green Climate Fund to assist poorer nations. USCCB and CRS also urge the government to remain committed to our involvement in the Paris Climate Accord, which was signed in 2016, to join the necessary international effort to serve the most vulnerable members of society who contribute to climate change the least. CRS is helping communities respond to increasing floods, droughts, food and water shortages, and conflict caused by declining resources. In Central America, we are helping farmers learn to grow new crops that thrive in higher temperatures. In Ethiopia, we are helping communities capture rain water better, for use in the dry season. These kinds of actions are helping the world's poorest people adapt to their new reality, but much more needs to be done.

What can I do to help?

Pope Francis has continued his call for us to care for creation, our common home. He has spoken out numerous times urging Catholics and governments alike to take urgent action. You can start by scheduling a district visit with your members of Congress this summer, letting them know that caring for our environment is important to you, their constituent. Download [instructions on how to set up a visit](#) and [tips for a successful visit](#) with your members of Congress. You can also contact your [CRS regional office](#) for assistance.

For more information, visit [Catholic Relief Services](#) and the [United States Conference of Catholic Bishops](#) websites. We also invite you to watch our videos, "[Catholic Social Teaching 101: Care for Creation](#)" and "[Climate Change: It Changes Everything.](#)"



Talking Points

1. I believe creation is a gift from God, and we must care for and preserve it for future generations. Climate change is threatening this gift.
2. As your constituent, I also believe Congress has an important role to play in addressing climate change and, as a blessed nation, it is our moral obligation to be courageous, to act now and to care for creation. We must protect vulnerable populations around the world, who are the most adversely affected by rising sea levels, droughts, and extreme weather. Leading by example will give our nation the moral authority necessary to hold the rest of the world to their commitments as well.
3. A core piece of the United States' response to climate change involves helping vulnerable people in poor countries adapt to the impacts they are already feeling as a result of climate change. The Green Climate Fund was established to help underwrite programs that directly help these people. Please support the U.S. commitment to contribute to the Green Climate Fund in this Fiscal Year's appropriations.
4. It is imperative that combatting climate change is an international endeavor. Therefore, the U.S. must remain involved in the efforts laid out by the Paris Climate Accord and maintain our commitment to serving the poor through fighting the effects of climate change on the most vulnerable.