

The Carbon March to DC

The Next Phase in the Climate Movement?

by Erik Assadourian¹

“But if you cannot see your way to deal with these evils and my letter makes no appeal to your heart, on the 11th day of this month I shall proceed with such co-workers of the Ashram as I can take to disregard the provisions of Salt laws.... I have no desire to cause you unnecessary embarrassment or any at all so far as I can help. If you think that there is any substance in my letter, and if you will care to discuss matters with me, and if to that end you would like me to postpone publication of this letter, I shall gladly refrain on receipt of a telegram to that effect soon after this reaches you.... This letter is not in any way intended as a threat, but is a simple and sacred duty peremptory on a civil resister.”

Mohandas K. Gandhi to Viceroy Lord Irwin,²

2 March 1930, nine days before the start of the Salt March

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Executive Summary

To effectively address the climate crisis, human society needs to become carbon restorative by 2050.³ In other words, in less than 40 years, humans will need to be drawing more carbon out of the atmosphere than they put into it. Considering that developing countries will continue to increase emissions over the next decade, countries like the United States, which are using far beyond their fair share of fossil fuels, will need to rapidly reduce their greenhouse gas emissions if we expect to prevent catastrophic changes to the climate, and thus to global security. This will require aggressive climate legislation—far stronger than most Americans, policymakers, and business interests are willing to support. Indeed, as current political activity shows, business interests are willing to spend millions of dollars to prevent action on regulating greenhouse gas emissions and to convince the public that climate change is not a significant threat.⁴ With this level of lobbying and millions more spent on spreading misinformation through public relations efforts, building a popular movement in which the majority of Americans are persuaded to put their short-term interests aside and demand strong climate regulation is not a realistic aspiration, and the pursuit of this is delaying effective action. Instead, we will need to build a smaller, more disciplined movement that shuts down politics and business as usual until climate change is effectively addressed.

This redesign will require more than lobbying or letter-writing, local rallies or protests, but as with other divisive issues—such as Indian Independence, labor rights, and civil rights—we will need to effectively use non-violent civil disobedience as a central tactic.⁵ I propose that a relatively small group of climate activists lead a march to Washington, where the most committed marchers then proceed to impede access to the city by blocking access to the main roads into the city nonviolently, particularly during morning and evening rush hours. Due to Washington’s significant commuter population, small size, and limited major routes into the city, this would not require a huge number of actors to succeed (ideally several thousand activists could be mobilized, though this could theoretically work with numbers as few as 2,000 or so depending on how aggressively the DC police detain activists and how creative the activists are). And because of the perpetual national and global media spotlight on Washington, this type of action could embarrass the U.S. government into swift action, and help empower other governments to increase pressure on the United States. This success could then be a powerful symbol that could mobilize other countries’ climate activists to create similar nonviolent civil disobedience campaigns, triggering a domino effect of strong climate commitments.

The time frame must, of course, be open ended, so that the government cannot wait out the action, but the march should be expected to take approximately three months (for the longest routes) and the action could succeed in as little as a year, though it could take several years before the government capitulates. Along with providing participants, the climate, religious, and student communities will be essential in providing leadership and resources for activists who commit months, possibly years, to this action, including basic shelter, food, and ideally financial support for catastrophic health insurance for many of those taking to the streets and risking both arrest and frustrated commuters’ “road rage” day in and day out. Yes, this effort will take significant coordination and many resources but this small campaign may do much more than the current efforts underway, and therefore may be worth both the political and financial risk.

Introduction

Since President Obama and a Democratic Congress took power in January 2009, no significant political movement has occurred on climate. This issue has not been a priority and due to special interests' influence, climate change is a political mine field best avoided by career politicians. Even the recent legislative effort, which even if it had passed would have only minimally reduced carbon dioxide emissions, was too controversial to gain enough votes to get through Congress.⁶ And now, with Democrats poised to lose the House of Representatives, prospects of passing climate legislation appears to be growing even dimmer. What could alter this dynamic is a true non-violent civil disobedience campaign that so thoroughly disrupts government operations and life in Washington, and draws unwanted attention to the United States, that the United States government feels compelled to make climate change a priority and address it in an exemplary way rather than in a way that placates the varied special interests and thus fails to address the crisis at all.

Up to this point, the climate movement has continued to draw from traditional environmental organizing tactics—including demonstrations, letter writing, lobbying, and so on. Civil disobedience has only been either symbolic, such as with the Capitol Power Plant protest,⁷ or has been in locations where actions were easily suppressed by police before media could arrive, such as at rural coal-fired power plants.⁸ A subtler form of civil disobedience is necessary, where it is more difficult to arrest participants and where the media has easier access to these participants.

Thus, what I propose is the “Carbon March to DC.” This action, modeled after Mahatma Gandhi’s Salt March to Dandi, will begin with a letter that explains participants’ intentions—specifically to organize a series of marches from across the United States that will converge in Washington, DC on a certain date, where many of the marchers will proceed to cut off road access to the city disrupting daily activity for the residents of the city and the government until strong climate legislation is passed. By focusing on this vulnerable bottleneck, a small group of committed activists may be able to force action where thousands of local actions have not succeeded.

Once the letter is sent, the march would begin soon after, and upon arrival to Washington, an open-ended blockade of the major roadways into DC would commence (unless legislation is passed before activists complete their march). This paper will detail the three key phases of this action, with the goal of stimulating discussion of this idea, and revising and enacting it, if it is seen as a possible successful strategy for pushing climate legislation forward.

Phase 1: Letter to President Barack Obama and the US Congress

Before Mahatma Gandhi and his followers started the Salt March to Dandi, Gandhi wrote a letter to Viceroy Lord Irwin, declaring the Congress of India's demands—namely to gain the independence of India from the British—and agreeing not to march if Irwin would meet him for the purpose of truly negotiating. However, Gandhi promised to march to the sea and start harvesting salt—an illegal act due to the Salt laws that required Indians to purchase salt from the British—if no solution could be found. After Irwin declined, Gandhi proceeded to march. And thousands of Indians joined him along the way. At the end of the march, Gandhi's followers harvested salt from the sea, helping to effectively dissolve the salt laws that were adding to the impoverishment of millions of Indians. When not arrested, Gandhi then wrote another letter, declaring his intention to take over a salt-making facility, at which point he was arrested, and helped to catalyze a series of nonviolent actions that eventually helped to win India's independence from Great Britain.

While the goals are different, this strategy can serve as the basis of a climate action that may prove as effective: A march that concludes with a nonviolent action of civil disobedience that so disrupts America and embarrasses the country on the world stage that the U.S. Congress or at least the U.S. president feels compelled to act—even at the risk of alienating political consensus or appearing partisan.

The action necessarily must start with a declaration of intent: an open letter to the president of the United States and Congress that lights the fuse. It will describe the demands of the activists; when the march will start; when it will arrive in Washington; and what activists will proceed to do when arriving (in general terms). The letter should also offer that if a strong law is passed before the marchers arrive, the marchers will participate in a celebratory rally rather than a city blockade (see Appendix A for a sample letter). Ideally, the organizing coalition of this march will provide a very simple and clear set of political demands: a significant carbon tax that increases over time, a significant increase in the gasoline tax, and so on (see Appendix B for sample legislative demands), rather than advocate for a complex system like Cap and Trade that could be so filled with loopholes and riders that the Congress can pass a bill that appears strong but fails to achieve significant greenhouse gas reductions. The simpler the demands, the more realistically whatever legislation is passed will be truly effective. Then, once the letter is delivered, Phase 2 can commence.

Phase 2: The Carbon March to DC

Soon after the letter—no more than a week or two—the march to Washington should begin (thus organizing must of course start before the letter is sent). The opportunity of the march to educate participants—and through the media the American public—should not be underestimated. The march, through its design, should model as low-carbon a way of life as possible. (See below box for a vision of how the march could be organized.) Of course, days will vary, but the more sustainable behaviors and trainings that are incorporated into daily routines, the better prepared for the blockade the marchers will be, and the more they will internalize sustainable living strategies once the march and blockade are done.

A Day on the March

4am: The camp stirs with first life as those on breakfast duty start making campfires to boil the water for oatmeal and mint and pine needle tea (foraged during yesterday's march).

5am: Those on lunch duty are up and eating breakfast before biking ahead to start cooking lunch with solar ovens further down the march route. Organizers send final emails to St. George's church to reconfirm that the church will provide dinner for marchers and with the media to confirm the day's interviews.

6am: Breakfast is served for the marchers. Marchers finish packing their backpacks and prepare for the day.

7am: The marchers depart camp. Some faster marchers stay behind to wash pots and pans used for breakfast and load them onto logistics bicycles and clean up any debris from the camp.

7am-12pm: This is the main bulk of marching time. Some on bicycles observe the general health of marchers and set up bike-mounted water stations along the way. Others bike ahead to forage wild foods and to purchase local foods when possible from farmers and stores.

12-3pm: Lunch break and afternoon workshop. On today's agenda: practicing nonviolent civil disobedience in the face of angry reactions.

3-6pm: The march continues until arriving at the evening's destination (which could be an empty field or in tonight's case, it is St. George's Church, where the marchers will camp either on the lawn or in the church hall).

7pm: The last of the marchers arrive in town and dinner is served.

8pm: A discussion is led by local climate activist Jackson Smith and singer Jenny Green sings a few songs.

9pm: Some marchers use church facilities to wash and launder personal items.

10pm: Marchers retire for the night.

The march will be an important part of the process, not just in building media attention and government concern, but in helping to educate participants—including in the ways of nonviolence—and increase their resolve. Moreover, if done right, instead of being an ecological problem (filled with disposable plastic and paper products and fast food), the march can help model a sustainable and very simple way of living. We, as Americans, are so far removed from a sustainable way of life that few of us even understand what it would look like.⁹ The carbon march would be a perfect opportunity to model sustainable living. From using no disposables, cooking with solar ovens, and using bicycles for transporting supplies, to buying local foods and foraging wild foods, and being as carbon neutral as possible, this march could be exemplary in its modeling of sustainability. Through the media’s attention, the march will also hopefully draw new participants and supporters that can either join or help sustain the march with donated services or funding.

Regarding the march’s route, unlike the Salt March, the Carbon March to DC could have multiple starting locations, with each of these timed so that they’ll all converge in Washington on the same day. (See below map.)



Possible Routes for the Carbon March to DC

For example, if there is a main route from New England, a series of western routes that also converge just north of Washington (e.g. in Baltimore), and a southern set of routes that converge near Richmond, the mass of activists can march into Washington on the same day (see Appendix C for a sample timeline), entering from both north and south (which could add a powerful element of historical symbolism as well, with both north and south unifying to fight a common enemy—climate change—rather than fighting each other). Having multiple starting points is not only logistically simpler and less

ecologically taxing, but it would also demonstrate that people from across the country—and not just from a specific region—are concerned about climate change.

The march itself has been shown to be an effective tactic. In the United Kingdom, Christian Aid organized a small carbon march, converging in London. This march, even without nonviolent civil disobedience, helped to trigger strong climate legislation by the British Parliament. Of course, the US political landscape is quite different, and a march alone will not lead to significant political action. But the UK Carbon March is an important case study in helping to plan the march phase of this action.¹⁰

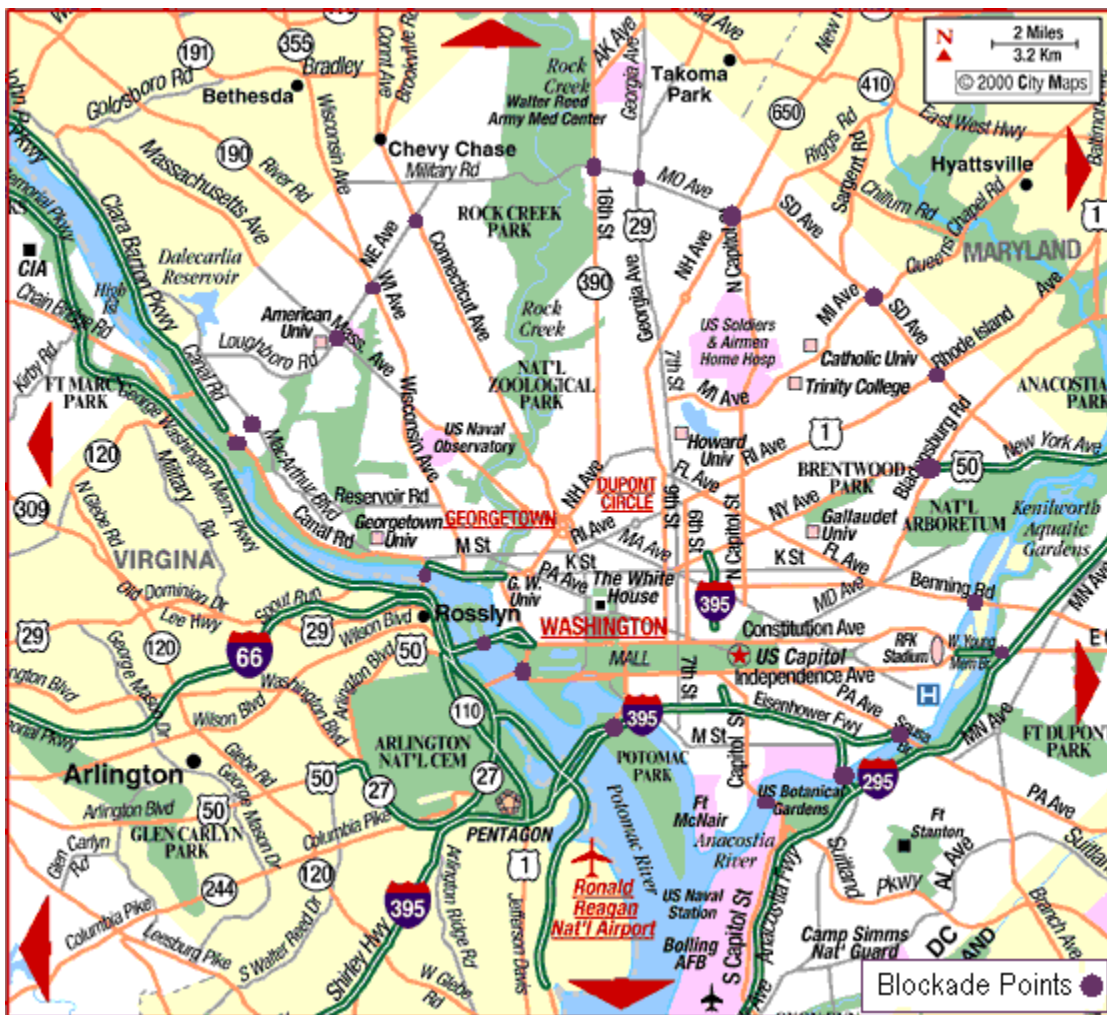
Ultimately, the march phase will act as a fuse that builds tension and excitement as the marchers expand in numbers, merge into larger groups, and come closer to DC. Furthermore, as mentioned, it will be an opportunity to model sustainable living and teach thousands, and possibly millions of Americans (through media and social media reporting) about climate change, sustainable living, and appropriate non-violent civil disobedience tactics.

Who will march? It will take a significant commitment to walk to Washington, especially knowing that one risks arrest when they arrive. Realistically, few people can take months off from their job, so this effort will require organizing those willing and able to disrupt their normal way of life: students, religious individuals who feel called to steward Creation, retired, the unemployed, simple livers who have savings and could take a year off from working, and so on. The ideal is having a diverse mix of participants as that cannot be as easily dismissed as a student-only or a “green hippy” movement. With the flexibility of college schedules, students could take leave for the time of this march, and thus will prove instrumental in organizing and executing this action. Some colleges may even offer credit for engaging in this movement and/or set up special off-campus programs that will take place en route during the march.¹¹

Phase 3: Carbon Blockade

Once the majority of marchers converge on DC, the final stage of the action will begin. To show the full force of the group, it would make sense to start with a rally and press conference in front of the Capitol, asking the Congress one last time to prioritize creating strong legislation, so that the group does not have to impede access to DC for long. (Ideally, by the end of the march, organizers will have identified some champions within Congress that may even be willing to participate in the action, if not at least draft the strong climate legislation we require).

With only a limited set of major routes into Washington, DC, and with the majority of workers commuting from outside of the city, Washington is vulnerable to a blockade. Indeed, it appears that significant disruption could be caused by blocking just 20 intersections or bridges (See below map).



A map of possible blockade points, however, a deeper analysis of choke points into DC would need to be done.

While this would not be a complete blockade, the traffic backups would so disrupt daily life that it would trigger political reaction and significant global attention. Most likely, the government would act aggressively to remove the blockade, which combined with many inevitable acts of road rage by frustrated drivers would draw attention to the sacrifice protesters are willing to make to both their

freedom and their safety to support this deeply moral cause—stabilizing the climate so the well-being of billions of people and the survival of countless species can be sustained. Global media accounts may empower foreign leaders and global civil society to ramp up pressure on the United States, either politically or economically, which could accelerate the effects of this blockade.

There are a variety of nonviolent civil disobedience strategies that could be employed for blocking the intersections, from the simplest to the most intricate. At the simplest, mobilizing activists to perpetually cross the streets (even during just the walk signal—and a little before and after) could be enough to impede traffic flow at the busiest intersections as turning opportunities will be prevented. Add to that more intricate strategies such as dropping small stones while crossing the street until an actual rock blockade forms (from the thousands of rocks dropped) to the direct creation of barriers—human or debris—to the ‘accidental’ stalling of cars on busy roads, and so on, and there would be dozens of ways that could be readily implemented. And these could be utilized interchangeably in an evolving set of locations on an evolving set of streets (once commuters started avoiding major roads due to early blockade efforts) which would make the blockade difficult to stop except through mass arrests. And even many of the arrests would be challenging to proceed with, as it would be hard to determine whether a person was simply jay-walking or she was protesting, whether a person’s car truly stalled or he stalled it intentionally.¹² In these ways, a relatively small number of activists could literally bring Washington to a stand-still, shutting down daily life, and embarrassing the US government on the global stage.

While some may disagree, it may work best to focus only on roads, and not necessarily rails. Of course, more people will turn to the Metro, MARC, and Amtrak, and thus the city will not actually be shut down. But the benefit is that this campaign will help people abandon their cars for bicycles and rail, and will thus help grow interest in and demand for a sustainable transit system. However, as planning proceeds, it may make sense at a point to also impede the flow of train travel and the Metro, perhaps by ‘accidentally’ preventing the doors from closing, over and over again, station after station, or blocking access to key transfer station exits. The blockade, by being dynamic, will increase the probability of success, even in the face of heavy resistance.

Social media, cell phones, texting and the Internet will make coordinating these thousands, if not tens of thousands of activists, relatively easy, and enable them to be a nimble, hard to predict, and maximally disruptive force.

Supporting the thousands of activists over a long time period will take significant resources. However, much of this could be in-kind: a couch in one apartment, a spare bedroom in another; commitments to provide a weekly meal by a number of DC-area churches, synagogues, mosques, and community centers. Plus, some volunteers may live in tents, or join together to rent group houses or apartments for an extended period, living cheaply and simply during the time they commit to the campaign. The donated services of legal staff will also be important, as activists get arrested, fined, and so on. Successfully clearing arrested activists of charges will enable their continued participation and a moral victory to the campaign.

There is much precedent for this type of in-kind and financial support from supportive individuals and groups. Indeed, much of the extended protests of Ukraine's Orange Revolution were funded by the people of Ukraine, and three days into the mass protests in Kiev, 35,000 residents of the city had offered to let people stay in their homes.¹³ While the Carbon March will be a much more protracted action, the number of participants, and thus the costs, should be smaller and the base of donors much larger, including both Americans and global citizens concerned with climate change. With some advanced work, we may even be able to redirect funds donated by individuals for 'carbon offsets' to this effort, which if successful will do far more than any small carbon offset project could.

While most foundations will probably be skittish in supporting something so directly confrontational, they may support the march or some of the trainings along the route. But even without foundation support, religious communities, student organizations, and individuals should be able to provide the majority of resources necessary, as this movement will not suffer from the problems of nongovernmental organizations today (oversized overhead, overpriced real estate, and over inflated executive salaries). To prevent co-option, no corporate sponsorship should be accepted—at least not in exchange for any sort of publicity or recognition. In-kind donations from businesses, large or small, are acceptable, assuming they reinforce the spirit of the march.

One cost that may demand direct monetary support for some is that of healthcare. With activists risking their physical well-being, helping pay for insurance, or creating an emergency fund to cover hospital care will be important. New healthcare laws, however, may offer an option for those under 26 to remain on their parents' plans, which may reduce burdens for that segment of the participants.

Phase 4: Applying This Strategy in Other Countries

This strategy—marching on the capital followed by a major blockade of the city—could be applied in many other countries—anywhere that has a robust media and respects human rights so that the police will not ‘disappear’ organizers and participants of this campaign. However, applying this strategy concurrently in other countries may end up defeating the U.S. effort as the global media will become distracted with competing efforts. Better would be if activists in other countries support the US effort, either directly or indirectly, and thus accelerate its success (As the United States is the climate’s worst offender, success here will mean success everywhere. Thus, focusing global activists’ energy on this target makes sense, even if it delays action in other countries.)

This success could then be leveraged to scare other countries to act as swiftly, by organizing similar actions. The combination of new US leadership on climate and the fear of a march shutting down their capitals should lead other governments to swiftly pass similar measures. This is a method that has been shown to work in corporate campaigns led by organizations like the Rainforest Action Network (RAN), which target the worst corporate offender in a sector and then, when that corporation capitulates, immediately warns the next largest offenders that RAN will redirect efforts to them unless they adopt similar measures.

Of course, planning and organizing for additional marches could (and should) begin before the US march concludes, and other support tactics should be used in the meantime—such as lobbying other governments to ramp up diplomatic or economic pressure on the United States—in order to complement the internal pressure. This, of course, was highly effective with the boycott on South Africa, and perhaps economic or diplomatic threats could be used to accelerate the US government’s capitulation.

Civil society worldwide has never been so effectively organized as now, and working in unison to pressure the United States to yield on its unacceptable position of maintaining extremely high per capita carbon emissions could be the most effective way to move the struggle for a stable climate forward.

Next (and First) Steps

This represents a working document—a proposal of how to shift the Climate Movement in a direction that will truly get governments to curb their carbon emissions. I recognize that I have overlooked some elements, and have perhaps underestimated others.¹⁴

Hence this document, along with being circulated as a PDF, will also be online at <http://fangorngroup.org/carbonmarch> so that comments can be added, and potentially incorporated into the text. Commenting on this document will help to strengthen it, and hopefully get it to a point where the community chooses to enact it, if not in this exact form, in some form that brings the climate movement forward and helps achieve its goal—namely creating a just, carbon-restorative, sustainable human civilization.

If you agree with the general sentiment behind this paper, or even if you disagree but find the debate of whether nonviolent civil disobedience should be better integrated into the climate movement valuable, I ask you to circulate this document with colleagues, through your organizational listservs, your broader social networks, and to interested media contacts. Generating a discussion and (if agreeing that this is the way to proceed) deciding on a concrete strategy is an essential first step for converting this idea into a reality. Only then, can mobilizing and organizing the march and blockade begin in earnest.

Appendix A: Sample Letter to President and Congress

February 14, 2012

To the Honorable President Obama and Congress of the United States of America,

This is not a letter we send lightly. None of us want to bring negative attention to these esteemed institutions of this sacred country. Yet we find it necessary, as the United States, and human civilization is in grave peril. The changing climate, brought on by our prodigious use of fossil fuels, land use patterns, and dietary norms, threatens to bring global suffering never seen in the history of humankind—both to people and to many other species that make up this integrated Earth system of which we are part.

Therefore, we must insist that you put at the top of your agenda legislation that makes the United States a carbon restorative country by 2050, and nearly carbon neutral by 2030. Yes, this is an ambitious goal considering our profligate use of fossil fuels today and our wasteful farming practices. However, the Earth will not compromise and demands that humanity lives within its limits. We, as a small group that recognizes those limits, must act as the conscience of broader society, even at great personal risk, and demand that the government brings our society back within those limits.

We ask that you immediately prioritize passing legislation that achieves these goals. All other legislative priorities can wait as failure to address climate change will most likely subvert these other legislative efforts anyway. Our economy will not thrive if the west dries up and coastal cities are flooded. Healthcare cannot survive without a secure economy, which again depends on a stable climate. It is as foolish to address these smaller issues while climate change goes unaddressed as it is to set a man's broken arm as he bleeds to death from internal hemorrhaging.

We will give you 100 hundred days to draft, pass and enact this legislation. However, if you have not completed the process by then, thousands of activists will descend on Washington, DC and proceed to cut off all traffic into and out of the city. We will disrupt business as usual until the government addresses this urgent crisis. Of course, we will be peaceful, using the hallowed tools of nonviolent civil disobedience only. But we will not stop until climate legislation is passed. We do not want to disrupt the economy of the nation's capital, nor do we want to embarrass the government of the United States on the world stage. However, the stakes are too high to simply allow special interests to derail the most important legislative process in our history.

We will proceed to march to Washington early this spring recruiting concerned citizens, parents, students, religious leaders, environmentalists, and any other who recognize the peril we currently pose to Creation. When we arrive, we hope to celebrate the momentous passing of comprehensive climate legislation. However, if no legislation has been passed, we will not hesitate to risk our lives and our freedom to disrupt business and politics as usual until comprehensive legislation is passed. For the United States, for the Earth, and for all of humanity, we must proceed upon this course and we hope that, understanding this, you will act in the most responsible way your elected positions require.

Humbly,
[signatories]

Appendix B: Demands to Legislature and President

Note to readers: this is a very rough list of demands, prioritizing taxes instead of cap and trade, as the latter is too filled with potential loopholes to count on its success. I leave this very general, though, as there are those much better versed in the policy than I, and it will be up to them to create a strong list of demands if this action moves forward. The key, I think, will be keeping the list simple, and radical. If we compromise down to what is politically viable rather than ecologically necessary, we defeat ourselves and the purpose of this march. Compromise is pointless if the climate still shifts to a point where positive feedback cycles begin. We must push for complete success.

Research shows human society needs to be carbon positive by 2050, and perhaps even earlier if we are going to stabilize the climate at any level that maintains a stable human population of the 9 billion projected by 2050. The current political process suggests that implementing a complex 'cap and trade' regime will be so filled with loopholes and exceptions that a seemingly successful piece of legislation may still prevent true reductions in emissions. Thus, we propose a very simple piece of legislation that should be very concise and very straightforward.

Carbon Tax: All carbon dioxide emissions produced by power plants and industrial facilities will be taxed at a rate of XX per ton, an amount that shall increase over the next ten years by Y percent, and over the following ten years, increase by (Y+5) percent. 50 percent of this tax would go to reduce income taxes, and the other 50 percent would be devoted to increasing efficient usage of electricity and creating capital funds for renewable energy projects.

Gasoline and Diesel Tax: Vehicular fuel taxes should increase 25 cents per gallon per year over the next 2 years, 50 cents per gallon per year over the subsequent 3 years, 100 cents per gallon per year over the following 5 years. 50 percent of this tax would be used to reduce income taxes, especially at lower income levels, who would be most affected by gasoline taxes. The other half would be used to build local transportation infrastructure: bike lanes, public transit, and traffic curbing infrastructure to help the United States move beyond the automobile.

Air Travel Tax: Jet fuel will be taxed at a comparable rate to gasoline and diesel, with the proceeds going to strengthening railroad infrastructure.

Methane Tax: Methane produced from animal feeding operations will also be taxed at [X] times carbon dioxide emissions, as methane is 21 times as strong as CO₂. A percentage of this tax could subsidize small farmers and homesteaders that turn to subsistence farming as a livelihood.

Buildings: All new residential, commercial, and industrial buildings must incorporate the most ecologically sustainable technologies available. These technologies will be reassessed annually, and the worst products on the market will be removed (similar to Japan's "Top Runner" program).¹⁵

Appendix C: Sample Timeline

February 22nd, 2012: Letter of Declaration is sent to President Obama and Congress; media is notified.

February 23rd: March begins on the west coast, possibly as a faster march, a bicycle caravan, or even a rapid public transit commute to the next starting point (see below).

Circa March 1st: March begins in most distant locations (approximately 1,700 miles): Denver, Albuquerque, etc.

Circa April 1st: March begins in closer range (approximately 1,100 miles): New Orleans, Miami, Kansas City, etc.

Circa May 1st: March begins in closest periphery (approximately 600 miles): Atlanta, Nashville, Portland, etc.

Circa May 30th: Marchers arrive in Baltimore and Richmond.

June 2nd: Marchers converge onto Washington. Press conference either celebrating new climate legislation (if strong enough) or declaring the start of the Carbon Blockade.

June 3rd: Carbon Blockade begins. Using nonviolent civil disobedience, participants block the major routes into Washington, DC, slowing traffic to a crawl and disrupting all forms of business in the Nation's capital.

June, 2013?: After one year of disruption, hundreds of arrests, a growing presence of activists from both the United States and from around the world, increasingly bold statements from world leaders, and countless embarrassing media references of America's inability to keep its population in order, Congress passes comprehensive climate legislation, triggering several immediate replications of the carbon blockade worldwide.

Endnotes

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² Mohandas K. Gandhi, "First Letter to Lord Irwin," 2 March 1930, at http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/First_Letter_to_Lord_Irwin.

³ W. L. Hare, "A Safe Landing for the Climate," in Worldwatch Institute, *State of the World 2009: Into a Warming World*, pp. 13-29.

⁴ For example, see Stacy Morford, "Fossil Fuel Influence Surrounds Senators as Ex-Staffers Turn Lobbyists," *Solve Climate*, 12 March 2010, at <http://solveclimate.com/blog/20100312/fossil-fuel-influence-surrounds-senators-ex-staffers-turn-lobbyists>

⁵ See the documentary *A Force More Powerful* (York Zimmerman, 2000) for an excellent primer on the effective use of nonviolent civil disobedience throughout history.

⁶ And worse, conversations and news reports are more readily turning to carbon sequestration, nuclear, and geoengineering, which may be economically lucrative options, but are clearly not as effective as simply redesigning societies to consume fewer fossil fuels, meat, wood products, and other ecologically taxing products and services.

⁷ I see the Capitol Power Plant action as a symbolic rather than a true civil disobedience effort. Wendell Berry noted in a speech in the fall of 2008 at the Society of Environmental Journalists conference that the time for true civil disobedience—rather than symbolic civil disobedience—was now. The Capitol Power Plant effort was supposed to be that, but as it was only one day long and ended at 5pm with a trip to the Rock and Roll Hotel for drinks, after "success" was declared, this was clearly more political theater than a true civil disobedience campaign.

⁸ Discussions with activists reveal that police have rapidly and aggressively responded to activists' protests in order to disband groups before media could arrive. One article that discusses this in brief: "Duke Energy Coal Plant Protesters Arrested, Shocked with Tasers," *Facing South*, 2 April 2008, at <http://iss.dev2.appperceptive.com/2008/04/duke-energy-coal-plant-protesters-arrested-shocked-with-tasers.html>

⁹ For more on this see Erik Assadourian, "The Rise and Fall of Consumer Cultures," in Worldwatch Institute, *State of the World 2010: Transforming Cultures: From Consumerism to Sustainability*, pp. 3-20.

¹⁰ One major difference between these marches would be that the US march would itself be an act of nonviolent civil disobedience. The UK organizers spent a lot of time and resources getting permits for participants to march along roads. While organizers may also want to pursue permits in the US, this could be extremely burdensome and time consuming. Making the march 'informal' and illegal, may trigger earlier reaction and broader attention, though it could also be used to subvert the action. This is something that will need to be examined as organizing begins.

¹¹ One professor I discussed this action with made this suggestion, so it may be a possibility in some of the more progressive educational institutions.

¹² Accounts from Vietnam protesters make it clear that rapidly losing activists to arrests can quickly undermine the effort, so making it difficult to know whether a pedestrian is just a pedestrian or a protester may be a valuable way to maintain the majority of activists (while committing others to do more direct actions that will be clearly recognized as civil disobedience, like shutting down a bridge).

¹³ See *Orange Revolution*, a documentary film produced by York Zimmerman, 2007.

¹⁴ For example, perhaps the target of the blockade should be Wall Street not DC. Shutting down the financial center of the United States may be more of a threat to political and economic elites than shutting down the nation's capital is.

¹⁵ For a brief introduction to Japan's Top Runner program, see Michael Maniates, "Editing Out Unsustainable Behavior," in Worldwatch Institute, *State of the World 2010: Transforming Cultures: From Consumerism to Sustainability*, pp. 125-6.