


Climate Change Economics

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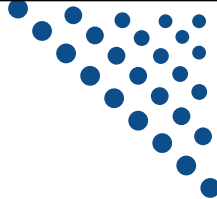
Jewish Community Center of San Francisco
January 16, 2020




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National Economic Education Delegation

- **Vision**
 - One day, the public discussion of policy issues will be grounded in an accurate perception of the underlying economic principles and data.
- **Mission**
 - NEED unites the skills and knowledge of a vast network of professional economists to promote understanding of the economics of policy issues in the United States.
- **NEED Presentations**
 - Are **nonpartisan** and intended to reflect the consensus of the economics profession.





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Who Are We?

- **Honorary Board: 46 members**

- 2 Fed Chairs: Janet Yellen, Ben Bernanke
- 6 Chairs Council of Economic Advisers
 - o Furman (D), Rosen (R), Bernanke (R), Yellen (D), Tyson (D), Goolsbee (D)
- 3 Nobel Prize Winners
 - o Akerlof, Smith, Maskin

- **Delegates: 483 members**

- At all levels of academia and some in government service
- All have a Ph.D. in economics
- Crowdsource slide decks
- Give presentations

- **Global Partners: 45 Ph.D. Economists**

- Aid in slide deck development

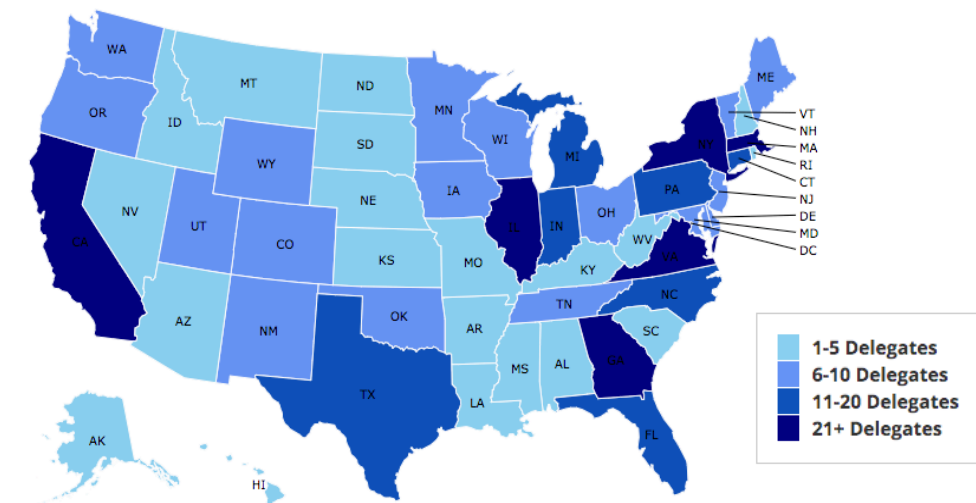


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Where Are We?



Credits and Disclaimer

- **This slide deck was authored by:**
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- **Disclaimer**
 - NEED presentations are designed to be nonpartisan.
 - It is, however, inevitable that the presenter will be asked for and will provide their own views.
 - Such views are those of the presenter and not necessarily those of the National Economic Education Delegation (NEED).



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Climate Change Economics



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How Can Economists Contribute to Thinking about Climate Change?

- By assessing behavioral reactions to climate change.
- By measuring the damage and estimating the economic costs of fighting climate change.
- By designing smart policies that minimize costs.
 - Balance economic growth with GHG emission mitigation.



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Outline

- Climate change science
- Impacts of climate change
- Economics of responding to climate change
- Addressing the sources of our emissions
- Climate change policy
- Policy in action



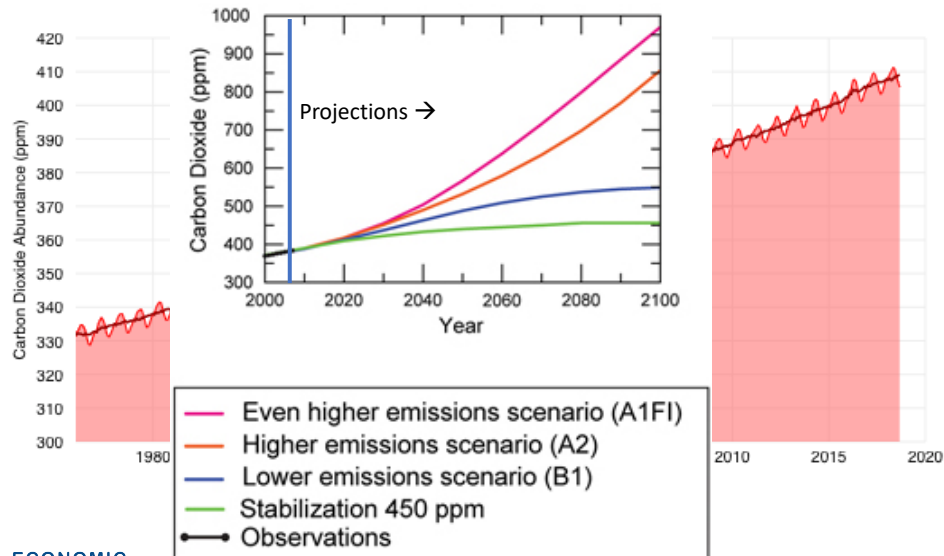
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Climate Change Science



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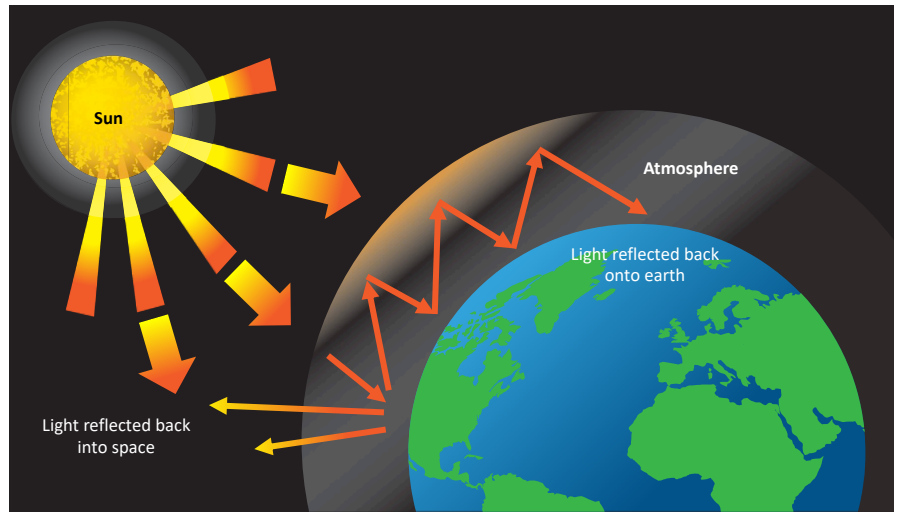
Atmospheric CO₂ Concentrations



Source: IPCC data distribution center and climate.gov

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The Atmospheric Greenhouse Effect



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Uncertainty



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How Economists Think About Pollution

- Pollution is an **EXTERNALITY**: a side effect (cost or benefit) that affects someone else when something is bought or sold.

- The power company sells you electricity for your house, but the pollution from the power plant affects everyone, not just you!
- This is a *market failure*.

- All of the effects are not always felt by the buyers and sellers.

- The price of electricity does not reflect all of the costs—there is too much pollution.
- Electricity is too cheap. The balance is wrong.



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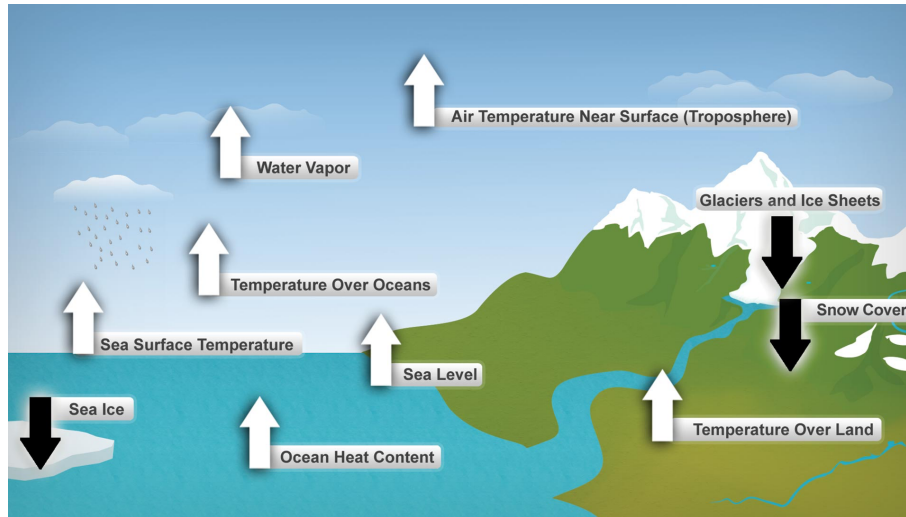
Impacts of Climate Change



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Global Warming Indicators



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How These Impacts Affect Humans

- Agriculture
- Fisheries
- Coastal damages
- Direct health effects, including sickness and death (temperature & drought; also pollution)
- Indirect health effects (vector-borne disease)
- Reduced fresh water availability
- Wildfires
- Shifting zones for important ecosystems, and desertification
- Reduced worker productivity
- Increased violence
- Some of these may cause human migration and/or conflict

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Adaptation Reduces Damages

- Human *adaptations* are costly actions that can reduce damages from climate change.
- The **net cost to society** is the **cost of adaptation** plus the **cost of the remaining damages**.
- People will take some actions on their own, up to the point where they find it worthwhile.
- Some responses require government involvement: large-scale actions or actions with shared benefits.
- Adaptation is already underway.



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Individual-Level Adaptation Examples

- **Do you behave differently on a hot day?**
 - Staying inside more.
 - Turn on the air conditioning.
 - Think about moving.



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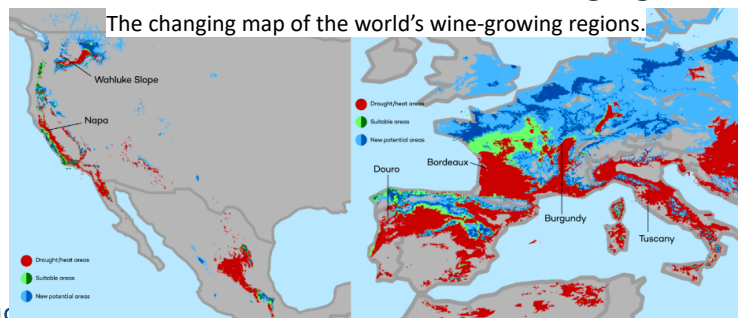
Public Adaptation

- **Governments can help:**
 - When collective action is less costly than everyone acting alone.
 - When individual action is not possible or likely.
 - When some people can't protect themselves.
- **Sea walls**
- **Ecosystems that provide protection**
- **Supporting low-income and vulnerable populations**
- **Moving residents of a town**



Market Based Adaptation

- **Prices and costs influence behavior.**
 - Where to live.
 - Where/when/what to plant.
- **Avoid barriers to market adjustment.**
 - Trade barriers, immigration restrictions, federal flood insurance, agricultural subsidies, and zoning regulations.



Social Cost of Carbon

- **Cost above price paid.**
- **The expected cost of damages from each unit of greenhouse gas emissions.**
- **Current EPA estimate: ~\$40 per metric ton of CO₂.**
 - About \$123/car per year.
 - \$26 Billion for all vehicles in the US.
- **Social cost of carbon will increase over time.**



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Economics of Responding to Climate Change



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International Climate Policy Goals

- **Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)**
 - Global effort to fight climate change
 - Reports on consensus of climate science, including economics
- **IPCC report in 2007:**
 - Recommended goal: < 2 degrees C (3.6 degrees F)
 - Industrialized countries should reduce GHG emissions between 25% and 40% below 1990 levels by 2020.
- **2016 Paris Agreement:**
 - Basic goal of 2 degrees C: requires 40-70% GHG reduction 2010 → 2050
 - Reach goal of 1.5 degrees C: requires 70-95% GHG reduction 2010 → 2050
- **IPCC report in 2018:**
 - Temperature has already increased by 1.0 degrees C - Recommended: < 1.5 C

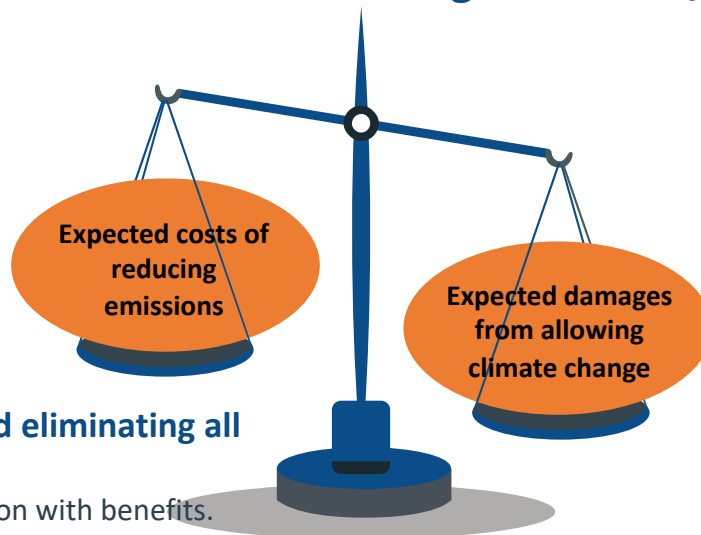


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How Economists Decide How Much to Fight Climate Change

- **Cost Benefit Analysis**
- **Weigh:**
- **Might not recommend eliminating all pollution**
 - Equate cost of reduction with benefits.



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Cost-Benefit Analysis of Fighting Climate Change

- Most economic models suggest the costs of keeping warming below 2°C are relatively small.
 - Amounting to **1-4% of GDP by 2030.**
- Costs of acting to keep warming below 2°C are almost certainly less than future economic damages they would avoid.
 - Damages estimated to be between: **7 - 20% of worldwide GDP.**
- **Caveats:**
 - Putting a monetary value on priceless things
 - Inequality
 - Uncertainty and risk



This is What Precisely Wrong Looks Like



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This is What Precisely Wrong Looks Like



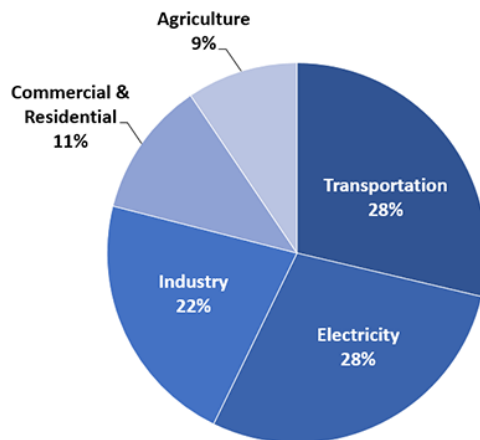
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Addressing the Sources of Our Emissions



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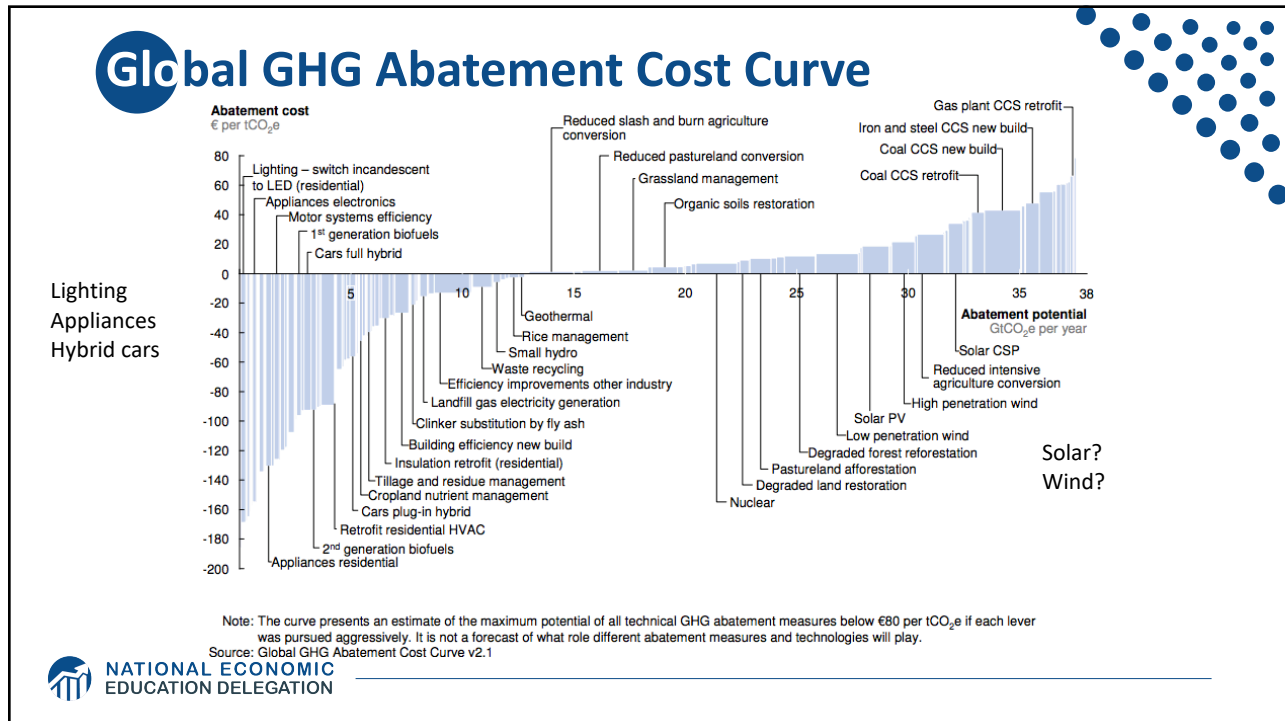
Total U.S. Greenhouse Gas Emissions by Economic Sector in 2016



U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (2018). Inventory of U.S. Greenhouse Gas Emissions and Sinks: 1990-2016



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Climate Change Policy

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Policies That Reduce Emissions: Directly

- **Regulation**

- Emissions standards or limits
 - o E.g., CAFE standards

- **Market-oriented policies**

- Putting a price on emissions
 - o Subsidizing green energy (*e.g.*, feed-in tariffs)
 - o Tax or cap & trade

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How Does Cap and Trade Work?

- **Activities to be covered are determined.**
- **Acceptable emissions levels are indicated.**
- **“Permits” that allow acceptable emissions levels are issued.**
 - How?
 - o According to historical emissions?
 - o Evenly across emitters?
 - o Sold at some price?
- **A “market” is developed.**
- **Those desiring to emit will have to buy sufficient permits to accommodate their emissions.**
- **Those wishing to abate will offer their permits on the “market”.**
 - The price of a permit indicates:
 - o The benefit of eliminating further emissions.
 - o The cost of emitting.
- **Gov’t agency determines equality of permits in possession and emissions.**

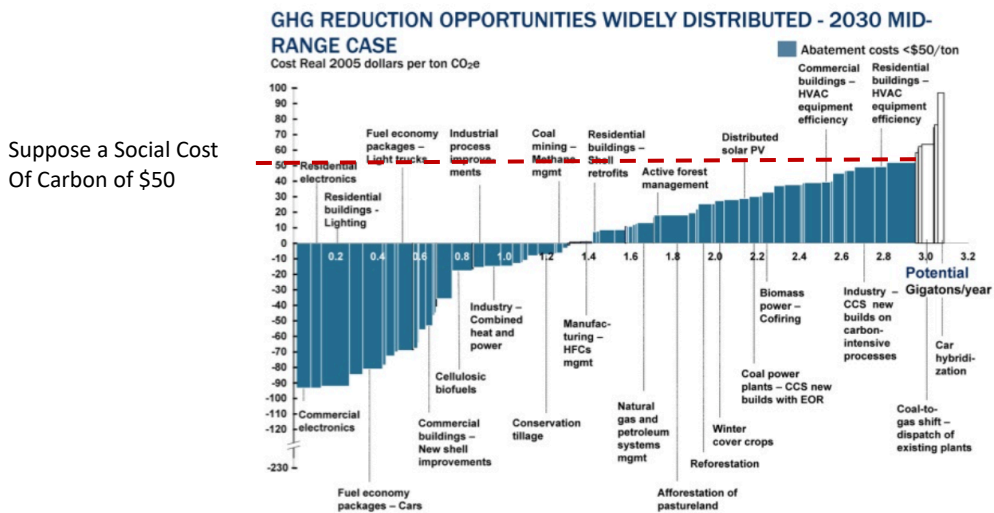
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How Does a Carbon Tax Work?

- Activities to be covered are determined.
- The price of emissions is determined.
 - Presumably some relation to the social cost of polluting.
- Emissions are measured.
- Taxes are determined.
- Q: What to do with the tax revenue?

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Putting a Price on Carbon



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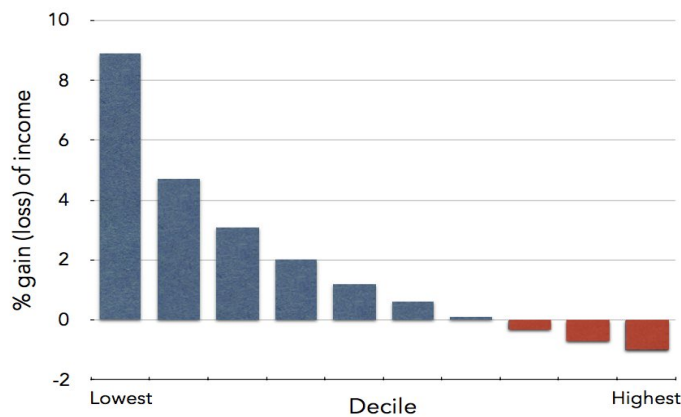
Carbon Prices: the Good and Bad

- **Good:**
 - Provide price signal to lower emissions.
 - They yield low-cost reductions in emissions.
- **Bad:**
 - Firms might leave to flee regulation.
 - It is necessary to monitor emissions.
 - Potentially regressive
 - Costs may weigh more heavily on low-income households.



Revenue Dividend Eliminates Regressivity

IMPACT OF CARBON DIVIDENDS ON U.S. FAMILY INCOMES



Carbon Tax and Cap & Trade: the Differences

	Carbon Tax	Cap & Trade
Carbon Price	Certain	Uncertain
Emissions	Uncertain	Certain
Ease of Implementation	May be easier to implement	
Additional concerns	1) Always generates revenue 2) May require legislation to change 3) Predictability	1) Susceptible to lobbying. 2) Only generates revenue if government sells permits. 3) Cap can be changed by regulator. 4) Less certainty over future. 5) Regulations reduce efficacy of Cap & Trade

One Other Thing: Cap and Trade vs. Carbon Tax

- **Emissions regulations and Cap and Trade can work at cross purposes.**
 - Regulations that lower emissions from big polluters...
 - Lower the demand for permits
 - Lowers the price of permits
 - Reduces incentives for other industries to cut emissions
- **Regulations can undermine the effectiveness of Cap and Trade.**
- **The same is not true of a carbon tax.**
 - Though regulations might cut tax revenue, revenue is not the goal of the carbon tax.

Thoughts on Regulation vs Market-Oriented

- **Equity.**

- Both types of policies can be regressive.
 - Cap and Trade and a Carbon Tax can offset the regressivity.
 - Regulations do not.

- **Efficiency.**

- Market-oriented policies tend to achieve emissions reduction at much lower cost.
 - Example: CAFÉ Standards vs Carbon Tax
 - Tax is significantly more efficient.
 - Why?



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Final Thought on Regulation vs Market-Oriented

- **Price or Market-Oriented instruments: RAISE PRICES.**

- **Regulations: ALSO RAISE PRICES!**



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Efficiency: CAFÉ vs Carbon Tax

- **CAFÉ = Corporate Average Fuel Efficiency**

- A fuel economy standard mandating that an auto-maker's vehicle fleet must meet minimum fuel economy standards.

- **Horse Race**

- Tax on fuel applies to ALL vehicles, not just new.
- Rebound Effect:
 - o Driving a more efficient vehicle lowers the cost per mile driven
 - leading to more miles driven.
- Slower turnover of inefficient vehicles: higher cost of new.

- **Summary**

- A given level of emission reductions **costs 3-14 times more with CAFÉ** standards than under a comparable carbon tax.



Policies That Reduce Emissions: INDIRECTLY

- **Subsidizing R&D**

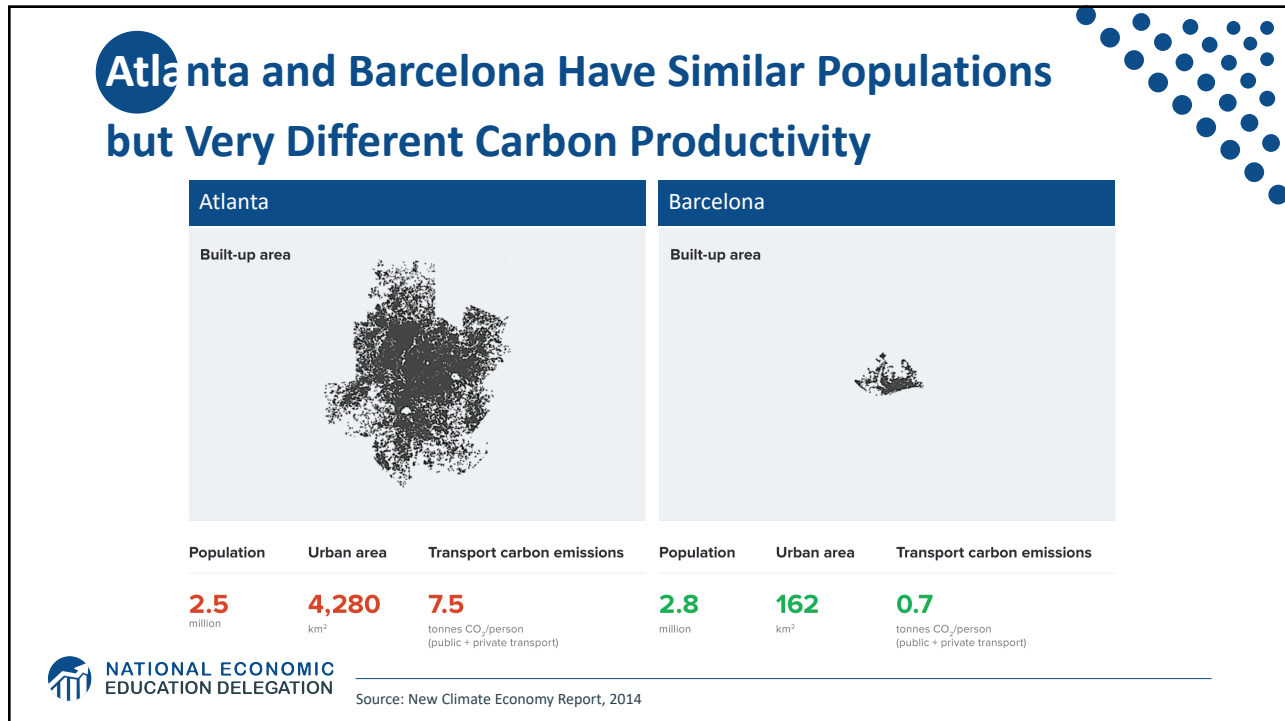
- **Grid / infrastructure**

- **Energy efficiency mandates and subsidies**

- **Mandating renewable energy (e.g., renewable portfolio standards)**

- **Land use policies**





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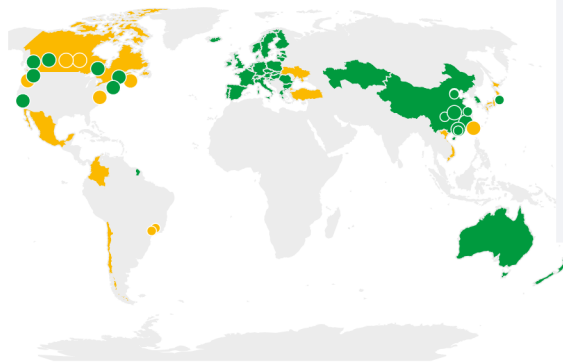
Climate Change Policy in Action



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Cap and Trade Policies Around the World

Summary map of regional, national and subnational carbon pricing initiatives



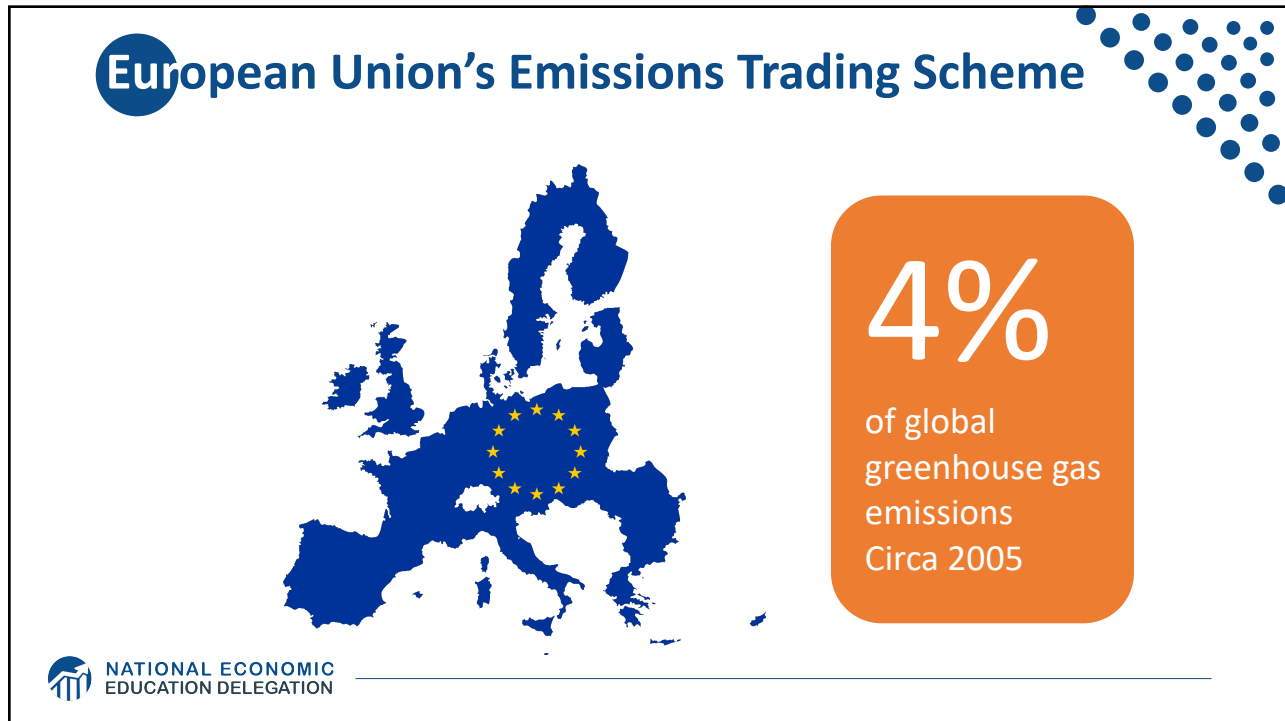
ETS implemented or scheduled for implementation
 ETS or carbon tax under consideration

ETS = Emissions Trading System = Cap and Trade

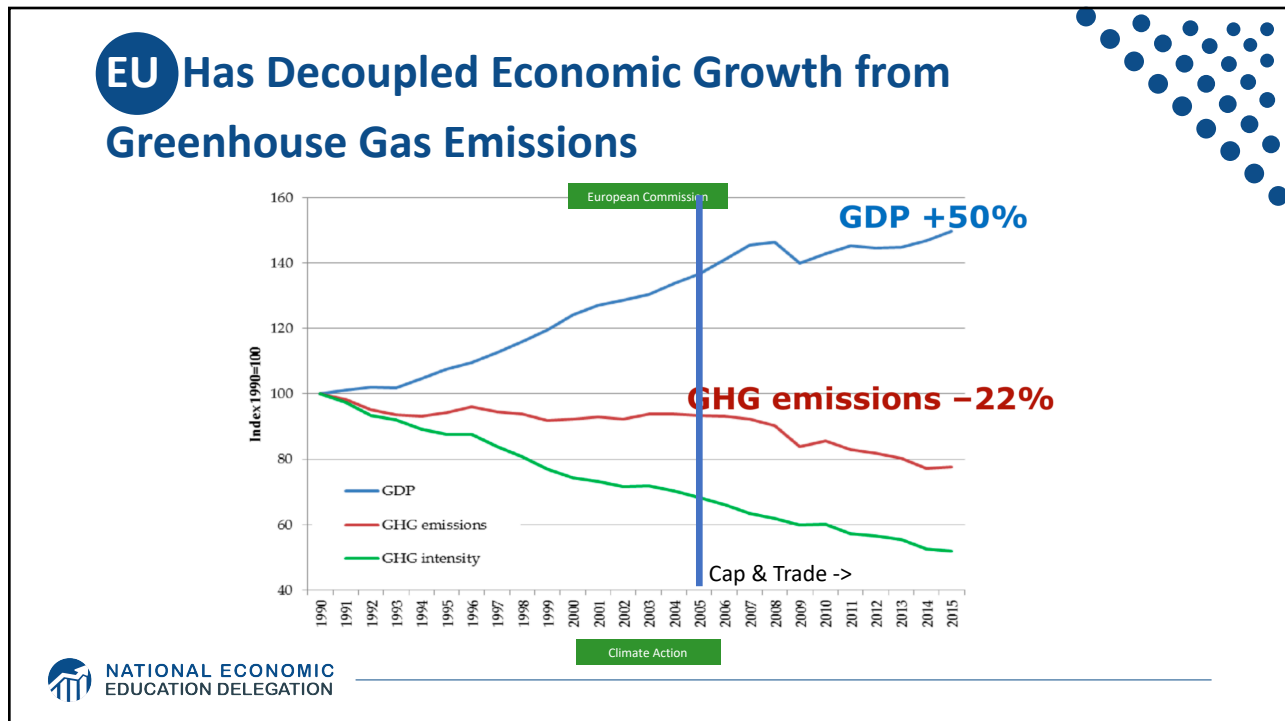


Source: World Bank - Carbon Pricing Dashboard

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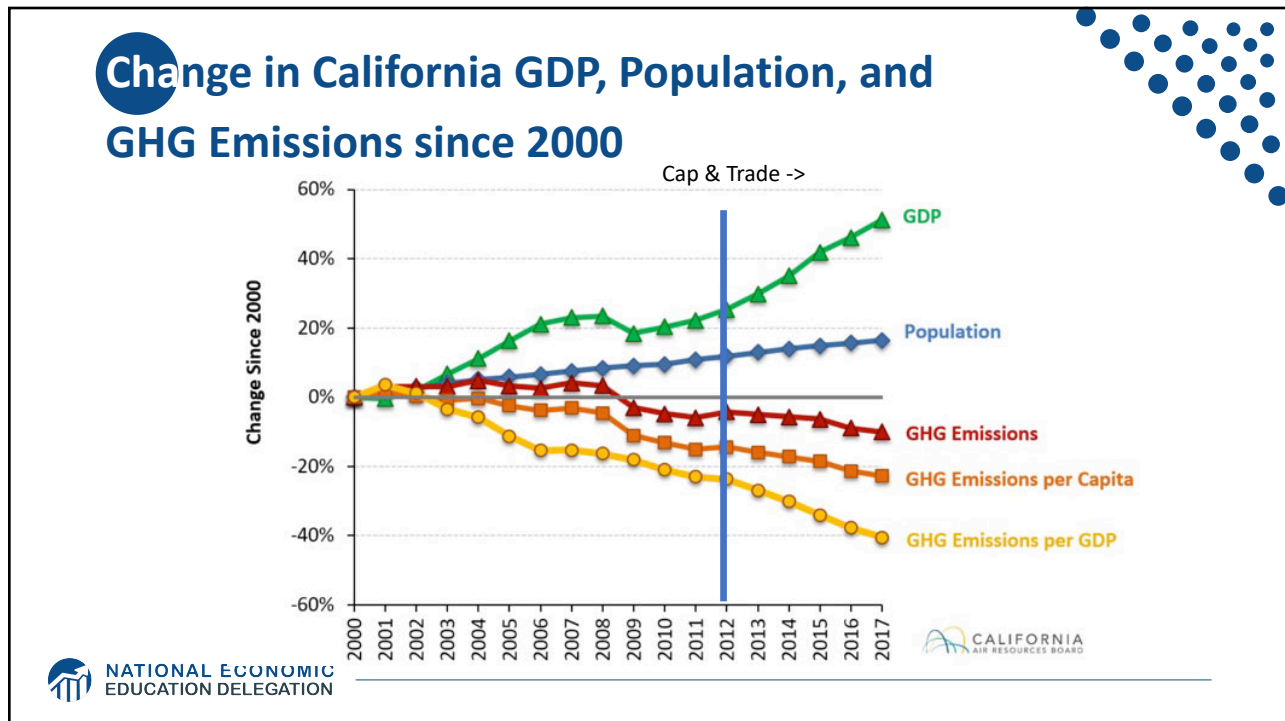
California's Cap and Trade System: 2012+



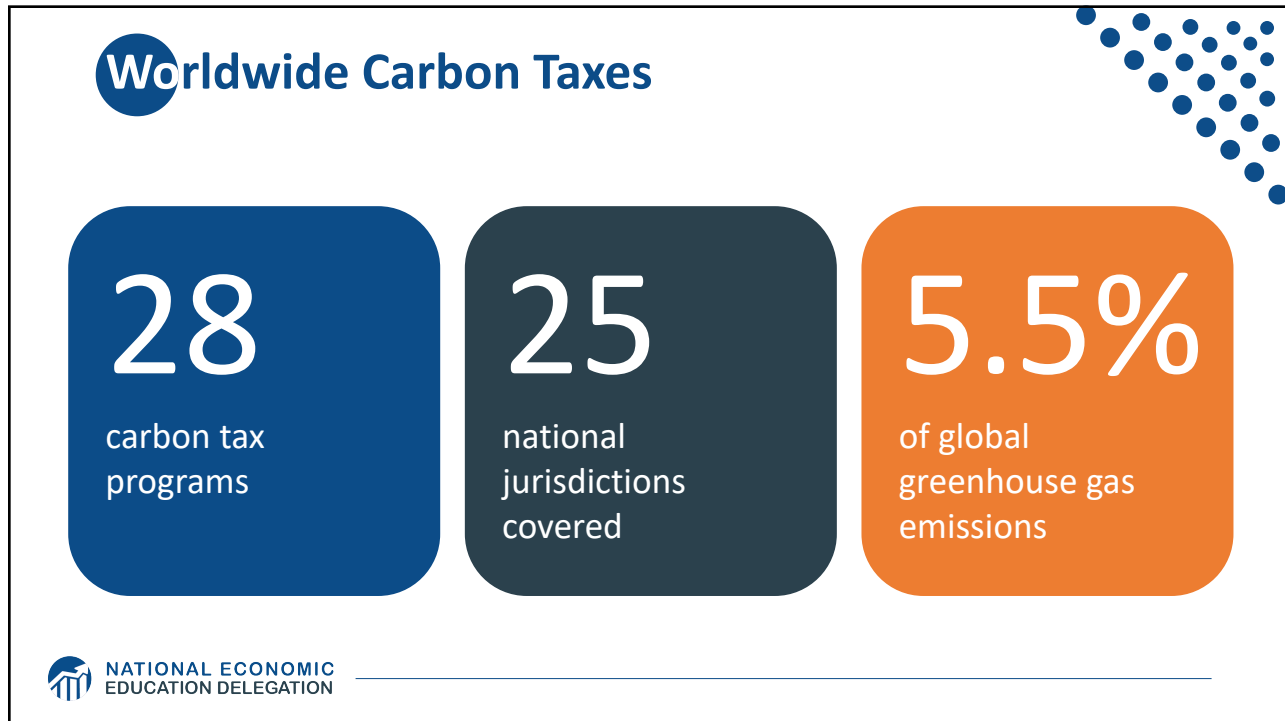
0.7%
of global
greenhouse gas
emissions

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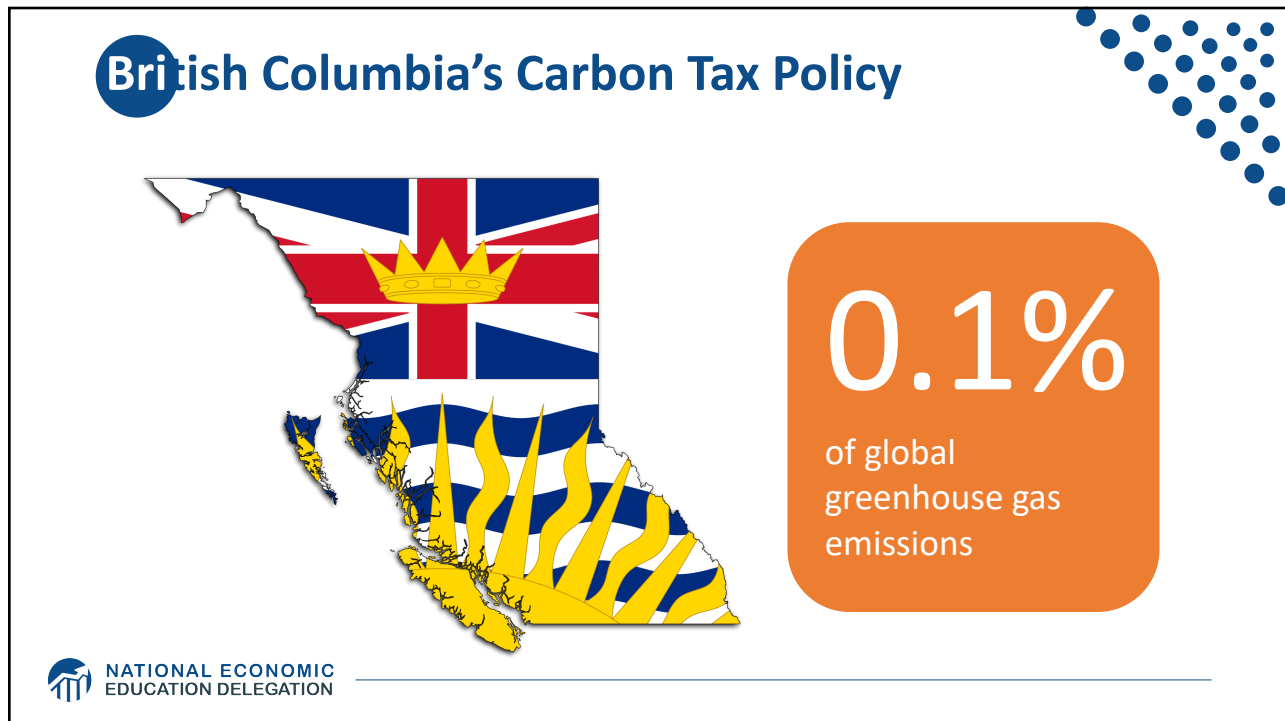
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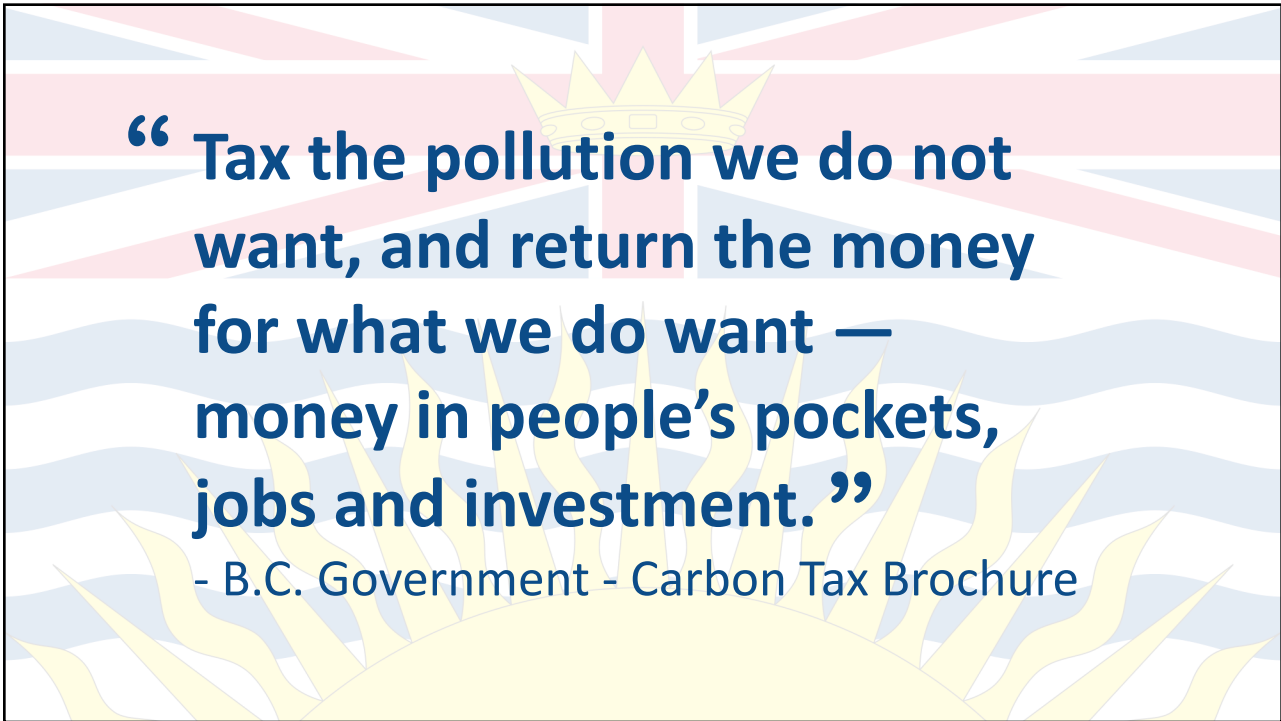
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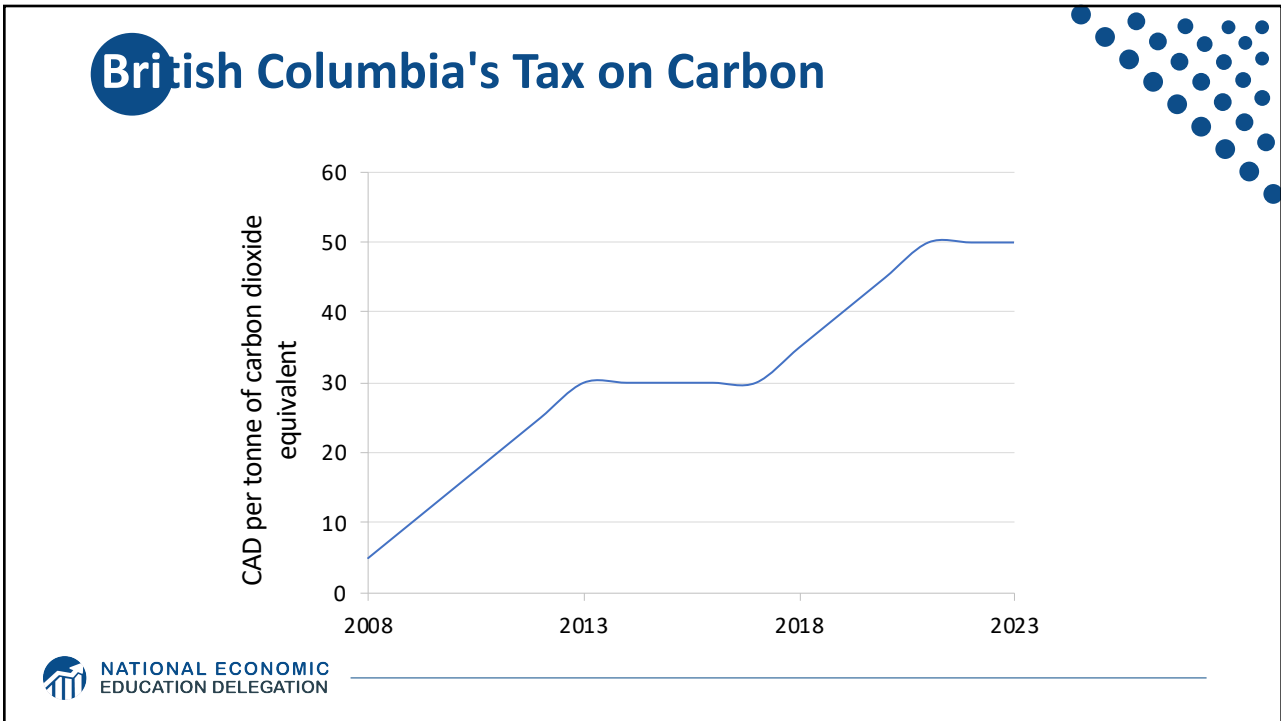
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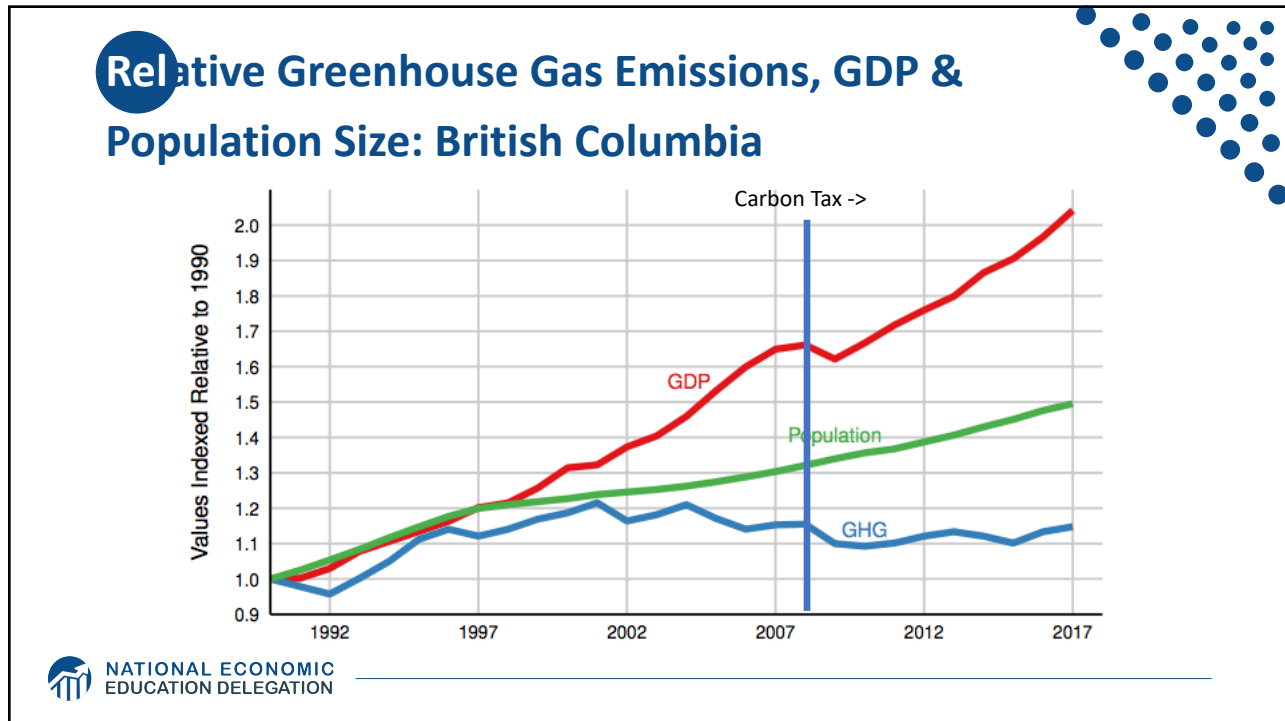
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Sweden's Carbon Tax Policy

Oldest Carbon Tax

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Sweden's Carbon Tax Policy



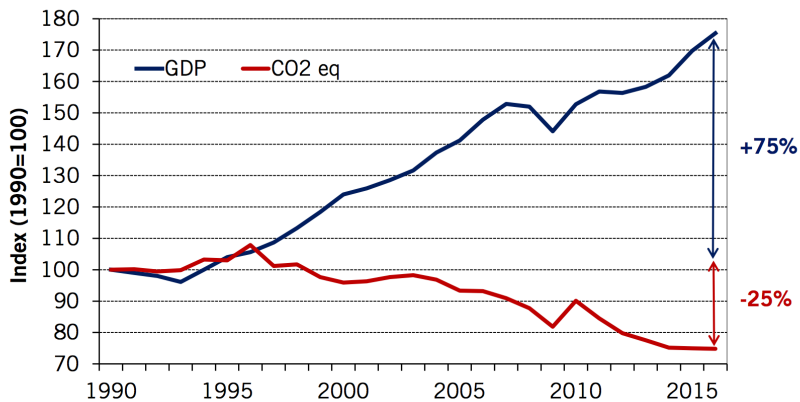
Started in 1991

Currently at \$140/ton

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Real GDP and Domestic CO₂eq Emissions¹ In Sweden, 1990-2016



Year	Real GDP (Index 1990=100)	Domestic CO ₂ eq Emissions (Index 1990=100)
1990	100	100
1995	~105	~105
2000	~125	~95
2005	~145	~90
2010	~160	~80
2016	~175	~75

¹ In accordance with Sweden's National Inventory Report, submitted under the UNFCCC and the Kyoto Protocol. CO₂ = approx. 80 % of total CO₂eq emissions. Preliminary data for 2016.
 Sources: Swedish Environmental Protection Agency, Statistics Sweden

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Summary

- Climate change is real, is caused by human actions, and has impacts we're already feeling.
- We need to reduce emissions to balance the costs of action against the costs of inaction.
- Scientists and the IPCC recommend that we work to keep warming below 1.5 degrees celsius.

- *Economists believe that this goal is well worth the costs!*



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Summary – *continued*

- There are many ways to reduce emissions.
- Economics-inspired policies can help us do this at the lowest cost.
- Taxes and cap and trade are proven effective tools to fight climate change!
- Other tools may also be necessary.



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Available NEED Topics Include:

- US Economy
- Economic Inequality
- Climate Change
- US Social Policy
- Trade and Globalization
- Economic Mobility
- Trade Wars
- Housing Policy
- Federal Budgets
- Federal Debt
- 2017 Tax Law
- Autonomous Vehicles



Thank you!

Any Questions?

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