

Article rank | 13 Apr 2011 | Traverse City Record-Eagle (Traverse City, MI) | BY JOHN D. SCHLEICHER

# Preserving God's creation is vital

Legislation to ban the EPA from regulating greenhouse gases under the Clean Air Act recently has been introduced in the U.S. Congress. The House Energy and Commerce Committee, chaired by Rep. Fred Upton, has been front and center in this issue.

As a bishop of the North/ West Lower Michigan Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, I want to express my concern about the damaging effects of such possible deregulation.

The ELCA has long lifted up the care of God's creation as an important component of our reverence and gratitude toward God, and our love and service to those in need.

We see this as a moral and justice-laden responsibility, to be undertaken with both humility and hope. Members of our synod supported a resolution calling for "energy stewardship" at our annual assembly last year. Similar actions have taken place in other synods of the ELCA as well.

We recognize the threat of global climate change, which is heightened by increasing levels of atmospheric carbon dioxide from the burning of fossil fuels. It is incumbent on us to take steps to decrease our use of such polluting fuels. Ensuring clean air, clean water and healthy land are central to our call as people of faith to be good stewards of God's creation and to seek justice for all people.

The Clean Air Act has been a valuable tool for helping to improve air quality and protect the health of both humans and the natural world, since its passage in 1970. For four decades, the EPA and the Clean Air Act have protected Americans from dangerous pollutants and led to significant public health and environmental benefits for Michigan and the Great Lakes. In 2007 the Supreme Court ruled that the Environmental Protection Agency also has the authority to regulate greenhouse gas emissions and to take steps to reduce such emissions from electric utilities and large industrial sources.

We are concerned about the impacts of climate change upon the poor and the hungry worldwide, upon future generations, and upon the viability of creation itself. Climate change increases the severity and intensity of storms and droughts, decreases food security in vulnerable populations, and exacerbates the spread of disease. Higher temperatures lead to more days with poor air quality, with impacts on children, the elderly and other vulnerable populations.

The new Clean Air Act rules have been designed to cover only the largest sources of greenhouse gases. It is expected that these rules will also drive investment into new energy efficiency technologies, promoting good stewardship and job creation.

Recent polling (Greenberg Quinlan Rosner Research) has also shown overwhelming support by Michigan residents for allowing the Environmental Protection Agency to regulate greenhouse gas emissions and pollution. We are at an important crossroad. This is about the health of our communities, of our Great Lakes, and about faithful stewardship of God's creation. I urge our elected officials to bear these things in mind.

About the author: The Rev. John D. Schleicher is bishop of the North/West Lower Michigan Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. The ELCA North/West Lower Michigan Synod has 52,411 baptized members in 126 congregations, including some in the Traverse City area.



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