

Editors' Note

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EDITORS' NOTE

The debate over climate change has evolved over the past several years; while it began as one about the need for action, it is now one of degrees. This debate has progressed from discussions regarding climate change to concrete actions by every industrialized country to reduce their CO₂ emissions, except the United States. However, at the state level, the United States has taken steps to reduce its carbon emissions and it appears that whoever Americans elect as their next president will commit the country to any post-Kyoto framework.

We are seeing the canaries in the coal mine with regard to climate change, including the dying of coral reefs, the melting of glaciers, and the increase in severe weather events. Every degree we allow Earth to warm we open Pandora's box wider. Many have already conceded a one-degree Celsius rise in global temperatures, at which we will increase the spread of severe droughts across the globe. A one-degree rise will force many species to migrate over 100 kilometers towards the poles or face extinction. A one-degree rise will raise sea levels, potentially placing many large coastal cities below sea level. A one-degree rise in global temperatures will cause many foreseeable and unknown consequences; however, this is not to discount the effects of a two- or even three-degree rise in global temperatures. As global temperatures increase the consequences increase exponentially. The economic, ecological, and human costs, devastation, and consequences are what makes the future fight over climate change one of degrees.

It is time for all countries, regardless of industrial status, economic, or population size, or even economic efficiency, to start addressing the carbon emission issue seriously and commit to binding reductions. The United States once led this effort with SO₂ reductions to prevent acid rain, and showed that phasing out emissions under a cap-and-trade scheme does not have to result in economic downturn, and may even boost an economy. It is time for the United States to start participating at the international level and show its leadership once more.

This is SDLP's fourth installment on climate law. From the beginning we have seen the issues evolve from whether to act transform to an issue of how to act. This issue includes a wide range of topics such as how state and federal climate change actions impact litigation, trade, and taxes; the developing domestic law in the United States and Australia; and encompasses the Clean Development Mechanism as well as successful efforts to combat climate change through the international ozone regime. We are proud to be one of the venues in the climate debate and

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we hope that this issue helps mold the debate into more action, because every degree counts.



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