

It is no secret that our environment has shown many signs of becoming a major cause for concern throughout the country and the world. The current problems posed and their many implications, such as water pollution, air pollution, global warming, deforestation, and many more, have caused an upsurge of organizations whose goals are to raise awareness for ^{the sake of} future generations and to implement change. While these zealous people are integral to keeping the world's "green movement" alive and moving along, what is just as important is the respective nations' governments' roles in enforcing and regulating acts that may keep our environment from worsening at a high rate.

The government has two primary ways to stem the detrimental effects of the earth's key environmental issues: one is short term solutions, and the other is, naturally, long term solutions. What some countries' governments have already done and has proved effective is appropriating proper incentives as well as retribution for citizens who take the extra measures to go the environmentally friendly way, or do just the opposite, respectively. These short term measures, such as taxing diners ^{with} ~~that~~ "punishes high-powered, gas-guzzling engines" and ~~then~~ ^{gives} a tax rebate to those who "opt for hybrids." ~~the~~ (Source B). While Singapore is able to keep these policies under control, the United States



"Congress and White House officials" should be able to do the same. An issue is only as important as policymakers can make it, and if influential figures prioritize the environment over other matters, ~~things~~ immediate results would occur. Other similar policies that the U.S. government already has in place are measures like the "license to pollute" in certain industrial areas. This tax in order to combat the negative spillovers of a factory producing goods necessary to the country's economy could pay for the more long-term environmental solutions while preventing some companies from polluting unnecessarily. Fines could not only stop, to a certain extent, vast air and water pollution, but the funds could be put to further ^{alternative} energy source research. ~~And while it is vital for the government~~

Though it is more than vital for the government to put these measures in place, it is even more important for the government to continually play a role as a police-like force in order to maintain its previously implemented measures. It is not enough to pass a law - one must uphold its sustainability, for long term effects. One such example is the recent enforcement of the Clean Water Act, enacted by the Environmental Protection Agency decades ago. The recent meeting decided to be stronger about the policies, setting new technology in place to identify ~~to~~ the pollution perpetrator and to keep the fines rigid. Some more economically-favored citizens argue that developments to help the globe in the long run may



point out that "companies are the ones who ^{must} shoulder the financial burdens of unwise investments," or that "going green eats up time for productivity" (Source A) may be right to some extent, but fail to realize that the little steps taken could actually result in an overwhelmingly positive outcome that everyone, even businesses, can benefit from. It cannot be denied that companies that employ a "green" marketing strategy by using ^{earth} friendly materials or processes when making products fare better on the moral and consumer scale. Sebastian Winter's claim that "when new industries grab a foothold, oil industries will fall by the wayside" (Source A) overlooks the fact that America's current dependence on oil is the economic problem, and the government's investment in finding a long term alternative solution to our energy problem could relieve the lives of many factories and citizens. Yes, some environmentalists may "minimize the costs of dealing with" ^(Source D) global warming and such, and some solutions seem too easy to be true, but even if the costs are heavy, the public should support what should be a greater role for the government to help alleviate this ~~global~~ soon-to-be (if we aren't careful) global crisis.

As said, while the government should play a key role in the crusade toward a "healthier planet," we the public are just as, if not more important than the policymakers ~~to~~ when it comes to implementing change. We need to raise awareness of all the problems and possible situations if we sit idly by and



let everything around continue. Articles like those of Thomas Friedman are abundant, as they should be, for raising awareness and getting people to see the mess we are in is half the battle.

The world is "hot, flat, and crowded," and we must tackle these big problems as "the biggest challenge of our lifetime," if enough voices speak, ^{and} if enough bodies take action, governments will realize how significant we all feel the issue is and will ideally put the problem higher on their legislative agenda. (Source C)

Citizens in the highest polluting countries should do little things like use fluorescent light bulbs, "take short showers," use less electricity, and save energy in general when at home or on the road (Source F). Policy is important, but so is individual action, as parts really do make up a whole.

It is easy for citizens and government officials alike to say we need to do something about the environment soon before ^{clean} water becomes a sought-after commodity like oil is now, before the ozone layer resembles a doily, and before there are no forests left for animal habitats. It is harder to actually do something about it, whether that's enacting a short term fine-and-reward plan, investing in other possible sources of energy, or turning off the television. All everyone does can make a major impact when put together, and so long as we ^{continue to} all foster green practices, ^{with the government and people playing key roles,} perhaps the environmental tragedies we all fear will stay in our minds, and only in our minds.

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