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# Crist can have global reach on climate change

Manley Fuller  
Special to the Sentinel

March 14, 2007

Mark it down as a seminal event in the first term of Gov. Charlie Crist's tenure as Florida's governor. On the opening day of the 2007 Legislature, Crist, with these decisive words, placed Florida squarely on the map in addressing global warming:

"This simple fact reflects a challenge that we ignore at our own peril. I am persuaded that global climate change is one of the most important issues that we will face this century."

This leadership commitment could turn the table globally. To better understand how one state could have such an impact, consider these facts:

On March 7, the National and Florida Wildlife Federations hosted Terry Tamminen, the former California Environmental Protection Agency secretary, in Tallahassee to meet with Crist and Florida's legislative leaders to discuss state action on climate change. Tamminen was not in Tallahassee to carpetbag or to tell Florida what to do. He was there to share with Crist the fact that he and Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger felt that the tipping point, the key to solving global warming, rested with Florida.

Tamminen told Crist a story: When Prime Minister Tony Blair came to California to sign a memorandum of understanding between England and California on climate change, Blair took Schwarzenegger aside and said that what California has done is incredibly important to Blair's efforts to lead a worldwide movement to combat this urgent threat. China is building one dirty-dinosaur coal plant per week. In India, 450 million people do not have electricity and India is taking strides to rectify that. If these two countries move forward in a business-as-usual fashion, they could literally double the amount of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere. But when Blair asks them to join the effort in the fight against global warming, they point to the

lack of action in the United States as the reason why they will not act.

With the state-level actions of California, the Northeast, the Southwest, the Pacific Northwest and the Rocky Mountain states, Tony Blair can say to China and India: "No, you're wrong . The United States is acting. Just not at the federal level. The states are acting. Look at California, look at New York. These states are larger than most countries." But Blair can't just keep saying that forever. More states must join the fight -- large states like Florida that can serve as a leader in the Southeast can help push a region that has seen little forward action on this issue.

Now because of Crist's bold commitment in his State of the State address to provide global-warming leadership, the map of our country's climate leaders includes three of the four largest states, and the geographic spread of action covers every corner of the country.

The tipping point is at hand. Crist's speech will not only push the global-warming debate in Washington, but the results of his leadership in Florida will likely spawn more energy-efficient homes, a stronger agricultural industry, healthier fish and wildlife populations, cleaner power plants, new jobs, lower insurance costs and more walkable and livable communities.

Floridians ought to recognize and applaud the monumental step Crist has taken.

*Manley Fuller is the CEO of the Florida Wildlife Federation, of which he has been director for 20 years. He can be reached at wildfed@aol.com.*

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