

# No time to waste in fight against climate change

by U.S. Sen. Angus King

I-Maine

Week marks Earth Day, when people around the globe come together to show appreciation for the planet we live on, and to unite in advocacy for the actions that will preserve this planet for generations ahead of us. There's no better place to celebrate and witness the beauty of our planet than in Maine — since the Gulf of Maine is warming faster than 99% of the world's oceans and the effects are seeing impacts of warming that there are few places more affected by the impacts of climate change. These changes would seriously alter key parts of the state's economy and ecosystems; the damage could not be higher.

In recent days, we've seen a serious effort in the conversation on Capitol

Hill surrounding this existential threat, focusing on a range of ways to take bold action and secure this world for our children and grandchildren. I don't agree with every proposal that's been put forward, but I couldn't disagree more with the need for a dialogue that leads to swift, attainable, and comprehensive action to stem climate change.

As someone who has spent a significant amount of his life working in renewable energy, I wanted to share some of my perspective on a few key ambitious yet realistic goals that can help us create impactful change:

**Strengthening research and development into electricity storage technology.** There are a number of renewable energy resources that have contributed to

reducing greenhouse gas emissions — particularly solar and wind energy. However, we currently can't rely on these sources to meet all of our power needs because they rely on weather conditions that are not fixed. I wouldn't want to count on a sunny day during a Maine winter to charge my phone. But advancements in storage technology would make it so any power generated by these renewable resources in excess of what is consumed in the short-term could be saved for a rainy (or cloudy) day. This would unlock the immense potential of renewable energy on a larger scale.

**Emphasizing energy efficiency to reduce overall consumption.** Energy efficiency is the unsung hero of efforts

to reduce carbon dioxide emissions — because no matter how great our technological advancements are, the cheapest, cleanest kilowatt-hour will always be the one that is never used. The challenge here is that energy efficiency investments often have an insufficient return, so we should be seeking new ways to incentivize people to reduce their consumption. My suggestion? Utilities could pay customers to consume more efficiently — call it a "Negawatt" on your electricity bill — reducing costs for the consumer and lowering expenses for the utility.

**Recommitting to an international solution.** It's fitting that Earth Day is an international holiday, because any advances in combatting climate change and protecting our planet will require **Please see Page 7B, CLIMATE**



## Climate

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an international solution. Carbon dioxide doesn't respect a nation's borders. That's why I was so pleased that three years ago, on Earth Day 2016, the Paris Climate Agreement was signed by approximately 170 countries. This was a truly historic achievement, that had the potential to be a turning point in the fight against climate change — but, as is far too common in this effort, a step forward was closely followed by a step back, when the Trump administration withdrew from this agreement in June 2017. This was a massive mistake, on an issue where we do not have any room for error; we need to return to international leadership on this issue, not ignore the problem.

Climate change is the most serious and pressing global challenge of our time, and it merits the most forceful response we can muster — not for just our future, but for that of our children and grandchildren. I don't want to not have an answer when future generations ask, "What did you do when the climate was deteriorating? When the glaciers were melting? When the sea level was rising? When the storms were increasing in intensity? When the wildfires were burning our states? What did you do, Senator?" I want to be able to tell them I took action — that we took action. And this Earth Day is as good a time as any to get to work — because we don't have any time to waste.