

## The Paris Deal

The latest international crisis is President Trump pulling the United States out of the Paris environmental accords. Bear in mind, this was no treaty. The Obama Administration realized that a treaty might run into trouble in the United States Senate, since the Kyoto Protocol on similar issues failed in the Senate 95-0.

Like so many other Trump issues, evaluating the departure from the nonbinding agreement will have more to do with the personality of the current President than a substantive debate.

Everyone seems to agree that global warming is occurring. The ice caps at both Poles are melting, and they are melting rapidly. Anybody who has been to the shore in the last few years has seen the tidal changes which have occurred.

Those who deny that climate change is caused by mankind and believe it is merely the cycle of the planet, are not voting trillions of dollars to protect our cities. It matters very little as to whether the human animal is partially or substantially the cause of global warming. No one seems to dispute that carbon emissions are not great for the planet or the health of its inhabitants.

The trouble with the Paris Agreement, other than the fact that it was not binding on the parties and therefore was likely to be ignored by the third world, is that it was not particularly fair to the United States. In essence, we are being blamed for carbon emissions that we have contributed to in the past. The major polluters today, which are essentially China and India, get catch-up time because their contribution to impending environmental disaster is more current than that of the United States. It is also indisputable that the amount of climate change that would have been effected by the protocols, assuming that everyone follow them diligently and honestly, was miniscule compared to the intensity of the problem.

The argument frequently used by proponents of the Paris Deal is that everybody else in the world signed onto it. To most countries, it matters little whether they agree to an unenforceable set of protocols or not.

Oddly enough, the United States repudiating the carbon emissions understanding may actually prod its successful implementation. Without the United States in the deal, other countries will have to step up to the plate. China already wants to show that it is a leader in the world community and its cities are smothering in smog and dirt. China has no choice, if it wants to grow as the major industrialized nation on the planet, but to address the pollution it is causing. The same can be said for India. Maybe a time-out from the United States will be a good thing for the other world polluters to consider what their proper role should be.

The assumption of the architects of the Paris atmospheric controls is that the biggest and richest countries are in the best position to bear the brunt of costs associated with

cleaning up the mess that humankind has made. That may literally be true, but it may not be true in the future. As China and the third world become the dominant economic players, making a great deal of their money from the old industrialized powers, they have an obligation right at the present in the here and now. To give those nations a free pass, suggesting that sometime in the future they will voluntarily behave better, is pure fantasy.

It would be nice to see Donald Trump more of a Teddy Roosevelt conservative, fighting for a good and clean environment as a legacy to our children. It is not enough to destruct; there needs to be an alternative plan. One approach to the pull-out of the United States from the Paris accord on carbon emissions is for the United States to become a leader in wind, solar, and other green technology. Those products will sell, and they will sell well. Right now, Siemens, a German company, is one of the leading producers of relatively inefficient solar panels. The United States should be the world leader in the technology to improve the efficiency of solar panels to convert sunlight into electricity. The opportunity to imitate chemically the photosynthesis process utilized by plants is technology barely touched by anyone. Fusion power, the power of the sun, is being aggressively pursued by the European scientific community and those in China, but is being badly neglected in the United States.

For those who would dump the Paris weather accords as some sort of evil world community, like the much debased and degraded United Nations, what is your alternative? To sit around and do nothing and destroy our habitat is simply not what a conscientious conservative would believe in.

So let's get rid of one-sided agreements where the United States pays more than its fair share, and instead adopt a policy and a strategy which truly will make America great again by putting us in the driver's seat in terms of energy production that is safe and sustainable. Can it be done? You betcha! We landed a man on the moon, created the atom bomb in 4 years during World War II, and we have made huge strides in conquering pollution and high gas mileage in automobiles. We can and should do better as an industrial giant and technological innovator which will have the great benefit of making our cities safe from rising oceans.

*Clifford A. Rieders, Esquire  
Rieders, Travis, Humphrey,  
Waters & Dohrmann  
161 West Third Street  
Williamsport, PA 17701  
(570) 323-8711 (telephone)  
(570) 323-4192 (facsimile)*

*Cliff Rieders, who practices law in Williamsport, is Past President of the Pennsylvania Trial Lawyers Association and a member of the Pennsylvania Patient Safety Authority. None of the opinions expressed necessarily represent the views of these organizations.*