CLIMATE VOICE

CLIMATE ACTION AT WORK

A GUIDE FOR EMPLOYEE ADVOCATES
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71% of US employees surveyed believe they have the power to make changes in society – and leadership appears to be listening.

In its 2023 CxO Sustainability Report, Deloitte found more than half of C-suite executives saying employee activism on climate had led their organizations to increase sustainability actions over the past year; 24 percent said it led to a “significant” increase.

Across all sectors and geographies workers are becoming more vocal in articulating their views – about the workplace, their employer and about wider social issues – and increasingly holding organizations to account, enabled and amplified by social media.

Future of Work: Adapting to the Democratized Workplace
Both employee advocacy and activism are on the rise.

Employees have been a powerful force behind corporate stands on social issues, from racial justice to gender equality to LGBTQ rights. According to a Weber Shandwick study, 71% of employees believe they “can make a difference by speaking out on controversial issues that affect society.” ClimateVoice seeks to mobilize the workforce to be equally effective advocates for climate policy.

Reducing carbon emissions by 50% by 2030 to achieve net-zero emissions by 2050 will require sweeping changes at all levels of government – federal, state, and local. The corporate sector could help accelerate the passage of ambitious climate policy, but too many companies are narrowly focused on reducing emissions in their own operations, or investing in innovation for the long term. These are vital - but we also need bold policy to scale solutions much more quickly.

The Challenge is that ambitious public policy is needed to solve the climate crisis at scale.

You can exert an outsized impact when you raise your voice about climate at work. However, employees don’t often realize that this lever is available to them, and when they do, it can be daunting to act without a playbook and without fellow colleagues to work with.
ClimateVoice aims to leverage the power of corporate influence from climate-positive companies to help win crucial climate policy battles. When employees speak, companies act.

The private sector has a key role to play in ensuring the just transition towards a more livable, equitable and sustainable future for all. We need bold climate solutions at speed and scale — and advocating for strong climate policy is a critical lever in enabling these much-needed solutions. The fossil fuel industry and lobby has played an outsized role in deciding the fate of climate policy battles. Now is the time for employees and companies to step in and step up in leading on bold climate policy action.

Deb McNamara
Co-Executive Director, ClimateVoice
Climate change is the defining issue of our time, and we are at a defining moment.

If you’re new to the subject, here’s what you should know about the climate crisis, according to the latest Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report:

- Climate change is already increasing the severity and frequency of extreme weather events.
- Scientists have stated that a threshold of 1.5°C global warming is necessary to avoid even more catastrophic impacts.
- Current plans are not sufficient to limit warming to 1.5°C.
- Around 12% of countries in the world are successfully reducing their emissions. For climate change mitigation to work, all countries—especially top emitters—must create more ambitious climate action plans.
- Similar to national governments, the private sector must commit to reaching net-zero emissions in their operations and stop putting more carbon into the air.

**Companies play an essential role in the climate crisis.** One major missed opportunity is to use corporate influence and lobbying power to promote climate policy. The fact is that all of us—including companies—can’t get where we need to go without bold government policy.

We can no longer rely on voluntary action or bank on hope for individual action at scale. We must mandate change, or it will not happen as rapidly and widely as is needed.
In 2022, the U.S. passed the most significant climate legislation in our history.

Known as The Inflation Reduction Act, the $369 billion climate and energy investment will power our clean energy transition.

This historic legislation enabled **huge leaps in the clean energy transition** – creating tens of thousands of jobs and spurring clean energy projects and production. Leading up to the September 2022 Congressional vote on The Inflation Reduction Act, ClimateVoice tracked 21 top “pro-climate” companies’ public engagement with the legislation, praising those companies who spoke up to endorse this legislation and holding those that didn’t back this policy accountable for their inaction. The business voice mattered in passing this historic piece of legislation - with employee engagement and powerful media coverage influencing at least 6 major companies to make positive statements in support of this climate bill.

After the passage of the Inflation Reduction Act, ClimateVoice heard from numerous people in Washington DC that the business voice really mattered in swaying key Senators and Representatives — and given the intense opposition from the fossil-fuel industry and from big cross-sector trade associations, the voices of businesses advocating for the bill (or even just the climate provisions) made it clear that business was far from united in opposition to it.

**People in Washington DC said that the business voice really mattered in swaying key Senators and Representatives**

Private sector and employee engagement and advocacy will continue to be critical in achieving climate goals. Now is the time for corporations to wield their influence through lobbying, trade association memberships, and public statements to advocate for bold and equitable climate policies everywhere they operate.
Obstacles to passing impactful climate policy

Fossil fuel lobbying power and spending are disproportionate to pro-climate lobbying. In some cases, politicians are profiting directly from oil and gas or coal, and in many other instances, receive direct campaign contributions from these industries.

Many companies have set ambitious sustainability goals with inspiring public statements on their commitments. However, when it comes to lobbying, there is often a disconnect between a company’s stance and actions. Why is there such a disconnect? There are a variety of reasons. At the root of the issue, companies focus more on short-term profitability. That said, public opinion is an important influencing factor. If a company is perceived as not being socially responsible or failing to act on climate, this can directly impact profitability due to consumer response.

Increased participation from the private sector in climate policy advocacy will provide a counterweight to fossil fuel industry lobbying dominance - and companies can and must lead on climate policy solutions that reduce greenhouse gas emissions, promote environmental justice and support climate action and progress.
Every employee has a voice.

While public opinion matters, one of the most direct and effective influences comes from inside the organization. Employees play a critical role. It’s a common misconception to believe that they must have a specific role in the sustainability team at the company to make a difference. Employees, regardless of role, can be very influential if they use a structured (and persistent) approach.

This playbook outlines four steps to help any employee advocate for pro-climate action within their organization. Everyone’s journey will look slightly different, so take these steps in the order that works best for you.

1. Get the facts
2. Find your influence
3. Engage your co-workers
4. Advocate for action

Are you ready to begin your journey?
"There has been this pressure building because as Gen Z, we’re the last generation to be able to turn this around... Gen Z wants to work for companies that have a positive impact.

Maya Penn, Conversation with Bill Weihl²

“Of nearly 100 North American employers surveyed, they found that the majority (84%) believe that employees have a meaningful role to play in driving their company’s climate agenda.”

Employers eyeing people-focused efforts to help achieve climate goals (11/4/2021)
Competitive for employee recruitment and retention is a key motivator for publicly stated pro-climate stances.

The nation’s future leaders and employee base, Gen Z workers, are most likely to state that climate change is their top concern. They expect this cause to be reflected in the companies they purchase from and work for. This is one of the leading reasons why employees have such a powerful influence on company climate policies. The question many employees have is, “What can I do?”

### Research your company’s stance on climate

Many organizations publish a sustainability report. Reading it will give you a feel for your company’s climate goals and progress. These reports typically outline actions taken by an organization to reduce its own Scope 1, 2, and 3 emissions. To decarbonize at the speed and scale required, companies must use their influence to promote climate policy everywhere they operate. This is called Scope 4 impact, and it’s typically not found in a report. To understand your company’s Scope 4 impact, try following key company executives on social media, investigating sustainability intranet sites, and talking to people in your sustainability organization. Large corporations can be highly influential if they use their lobbying power for pro-climate policy.

Public statements by executives on social media and the company website are one way to gauge your company’s advocacy. Alignment with trade associations and spending allocation can be more challenging to investigate. Trade
associations often do not disclose membership or donation sources. This enables companies to publicly state support for pro-climate policies while privately funding lobby efforts that undermine those positions. For example, companies such as Microsoft, Google, Amazon and Salesforce identify as pro-climate and are working on climate solutions while simultaneously being members of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, a trade group historically blocking climate policy progress. Companies such as Apple and Unilever have left the U.S. Chamber of Commerce in part due to the Chamber’s previous positions on climate.

In the U.S., two trade associations have been called out for lobbying against key climate legislation – The Business Roundtable and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce. Efforts have been made to change the stance of the trade associations toward pro-climate lobbying, yet there are complicating factors. For example, a recent report from the Bridge Project found that the fossil fuel industry is among the largest sources of funds for the U.S. Chamber of Commerce. In 2023, ClimateVoice launched the Escape the Chamber Campaign to address the climate policy obstruction by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, This is why ClimateVoice calls on companies to leave the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and lead on climate policy. Silence is complicity.

Another way to research your company’s stance on climate is to dig into ESG efforts (Environmental, Social, Governance). When a company adopts ESG principles, the corporate strategy should be focused on these three pillars of the environment, social and governance aspects. ESG is a framework available to also analyze investment opportunities and risks, including climate-related financial risk. Responsible investment practices are a critical lever to addressing the climate crisis, and climate risk is also investment risk. A vast majority of investors surveyed earlier this year believe that responsible investing should be factored into investment processes. Employees and sustainability professionals should talk about how ESG investments help them build a better and more profitable business. Companies should not be distracted by anti-ESG rhetoric which is a new form of climate denialism, but rather should remain focused on aligning all levels of business operations and advocacy with achieving meaningful climate goals, and continue to advocate forcefully and consistently for climate policy progress on all fronts.
Lean on widely accepted resources

Understanding if your company is doing all it can to promote and impact climate policy is not always straightforward. This is where resources like the AAA Framework for Climate Policy Leadership are helpful. The AAA framework outlines what a holistic corporate approach should include. Review the AAA Guide for Companies to discover how your company stacks up.

How I came to work on climate issues

I was inspired by HP, the first computer manufacturer to make PC components from ocean-bound plastic. The company developed aggressive plans to convert packaging and manufacturing techniques, change its supply chain, and more. Thinking about the difference an organization that ships 1.7 PCs every second could make helped me understand the important role companies play. With the burning question in mind, “what can I do?” I decided to train with the Climate Reality Project, a nonprofit founded by Al Gore that mobilizes people to become powerful climate change activists.

My advice for other workplace climate champions

Don’t be afraid to fail, and don’t think you need to be an expert to make a difference. People are looking for leadership right now. Seeing someone make an effort is truly all it takes to inspire them. People come out of the woodwork when they see someone trying.
Addressing environmental and climate issues makes good business sense... As more companies join the fight against climate change, it’s imperative that they develop an overall climate strategy, communicate clearly and empower the right people to take action.

“Strong climate action could deliver US $43 trillion to the global economy by 2070.”

The Turning Point (Deloitte Economics Institute, 6/22/2022)
STEP TWO

Find. Your. Influence.

Take advantage of your insider access to connect with the individuals who are key influencers and decision-makers.

As an employee, you may doubt that you can create meaningful change, but because you are on the inside, you can leverage your relationships and connections to find your circle of influence. By asking the right questions and defining the case for change, you can elevate critical issues, raise awareness and inspire others to champion action.

Use your inside access

Research suggests that when employees want to influence change in an organization, they are far more likely to pursue quieter and less risky tactics\(^4\). Actions that rely more on persuasion and “issue selling” to internal decision-makers can be more effective catalysts for change than disruptive tactics.

Pursuing change through persuasive tactics requires a deeper understanding of the situation and conditions than what is available in a sustainability report, website, or social media. It will require talking to people in the organization with relevant knowledge. Take advantage of your insider access to connect with the individuals who are key influencers and decision-makers. They are more likely to take your meeting than they are to meet with someone from the outside.

Responsibility for corporate lobbying on climate policy is not likely to appear in an organization chart if this function exists. Begin by researching
the organizational structure of the Chief Sustainability Officer and Office of Governmental Affairs. If you work for a smaller company without these roles, begin by asking your supervisor for insight on who best to connect with. Build a power map of key influencers and decision-makers. It may take a few meetings to assemble a power map. There are two approaches to getting to power – top-down and bottom-up. Before connecting with a decision-maker, have a clear understanding of the circumstance.

Questions to Ask

1. Who has the authority to make the change?
2. Who is in a position to influence the decision?
3. Is the organization already using its lobbying power for climate policy?
4. Is there a general charter or are there existing policies in place?

Build relationships

When establishing relationships and conducting discovery, create a plan for each meeting. What is the intended outcome of the discussion? How should the conversation be structured?

Revisit resources like the AAA Framework for Climate Policy Leadership for guidance. It can help form the questions to ask when benchmarking where your company fits within the maturity scale related to a climate policy agenda.
Define the case for change

After conducting a few internal discovery meetings, the next step is to frame the issue or define the problem statement.

Adjust the questions and intended outcomes based on the individual’s role and sphere of influence. It’s important to approach these types of discussions with a sense of openness – seeking understanding, not confrontation. This will be instrumental in gaining influence.

QUESTION TO ASK

1. **Is your organization advocating for climate policy?**
   If so, are there gaps in the priorities (ex: decarbonize electricity and transportation, limit methane emissions, advance nature-based climate solutions, etc.)?

2. **Is your organization a member of trade associations whose actions do not align with the company’s advocacy efforts?**
   For example, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, the Business Roundtable (BRT), National Association of Manufacturers (NAM), or state groups like the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC)?

3. **Is your organization allocating resources to advance climate policies?**
When building a business case for change, it’s helpful to understand where your company fits in the ecosystem relative to other companies – particularly those in the same or similar industry. This can be difficult information to find. One of the more effective ways to gather information about what others are doing is to talk with like-minded employees from other companies. This is where engaging with pro-climate nonprofits like ClimateVoice, Drawdown Labs, Work for Climate and the Climate Reality Project is helpful. These groups have activities and sometimes dedicated resources for business engagement, offering an opportunity to engage with others from similar companies.

Defining the problem statement and understanding where your organization stands relative to other similar companies lays the groundwork to advocate for action. The next important step is to engage co-workers. A case for change is stronger when presented by multiple employees or on behalf of a larger part of the organization.

How I came to work on climate issues

Microsoft is one of the largest companies in the world. As soon as I arrived, I started asking “what is the company doing for the climate crisis?” and “how can regular employees like me use the company’s resources to help?” When there weren’t clear answers to either, I resolved to find them. I worked with a colleague to convince Microsoft to open its first zero-waste cafeteria. Bolstered by our success, we started a local meetup group in Seattle to find like-minded colleagues. Over time, our sustainability community has grown from a handful of employees in Seattle to a global community with 10,000+ people in 35 chapters around the world.

My advice for other workplace climate champions

Do it, right now. Recognize and seize your power. Employees have immense power over how their companies operate, and a direct line to senior leaders like CEOs to advocate for change from within. Use it, and get organized. The more people you draw into your movement, the harder you will be to ignore. And make it fun! Give people a reason to keep coming back.
I am fighting – as much as I can – for a sustainable and equal world for all. It makes me feel hopeful that big companies like Microsoft take a strong stand on these important issues and I am hoping this article inspires you to do it too.

I am a Sustainability activist at work. And that’s OK. (3/29/2021)

8 out of 10 employees are ready and willing to take action on climate change in their jobs. 45 percent are ready to go even further and become pioneers of climate action within their teams and functions.

Engage your coworkers

An effective way to begin engaging coworkers is to host an educational event.

For example, book an outside speaker to present on a sustainability topic. If you don’t have contact with a potential guest speaker, affiliation or membership with a nonprofit can be helpful. Work with local employee communication leads to promote the event. Ensure you keep track of participants to develop your own mailing list. During the event, let people know you are starting an employee sustainability group and are looking for volunteers. One or two people will likely come forward. Many people around you are as concerned about climate change as you are. They often just don’t know what to do about it. When they see you taking action, they may find it motivating and join in.

Create a steady pace of contact

Once you have a volunteer or two, set up a regular cadence. It’s helpful to have a “climate buddy” to hold each other accountable and share the work. Employee advocacy is typically volunteer work, and it can be difficult to find the time. A climate buddy will keep you motivated and contribute ideas you hadn’t thought of. Others are more likely to join in when they see two or three people leading. This creates momentum. Together with your climate buddy, put together a plan for the new employee group. Seek a source of funding and an executive sponsor.
STEP THREE: ENGAGE YOUR COWORKERS

Join or start an employee resource group – and request funding if resources allow

Find out if your company has an Employee Resource Group focused on the environment, sustainability or climate solutions. These groups are employee-led and represent a wide variety of employee interests. An already existing ERG (Employee Resource Group) with an environmental, sustainability or climate focus will be a key place to begin connecting with like-minded employees, learning about efforts underway at your organization, and will provide an important venue for you to bring your ideas, questions and calls to action. If your organization does not have an ERG with this focus, find out how to begin one following the appropriate channels at your organization. Get buy-in from needed staff, define the mission and purpose, begin recruiting fellow members, host initial meetings and set up channels of communication.

Many companies provide nominal budgets for ERGs including for events such as lunch and learns, webinars and other events. It doesn’t take much funding for an effort like this. The most common expense is lunch after events. Consider hosting a webinar and inviting a representative from a partnering nonprofit or a leader from your company as a guest speaker to promote the event. Corporate sponsorships can also be considered.

Large corporations may or may not have a formal employee network. These efforts are often grassroots and localized. Seek out fellow employee leads in other parts of the world who are doing something similar. HR or the Sustainability organizations will likely know who these people are and be able to connect you. Band these disparate groups together to form an employee network. Keep a regular cadence going to share ideas.

Get buy-in from needed staff, define the mission and purpose, begin recruiting fellow members, host initial meetings and set up channels of communication
STEP THREE: ENGAGE YOUR COWORKERS

Build community

Volunteer events in the community are a great way to mobilize your co-workers. In today’s business climate, when many are still working remotely, they appreciate an opportunity to get together. They come in groups and enjoy doing something productive for the community. Before long, you’ll have a following.

Tips for Effective Organizing

Get colleagues motivated and engaged
If so, are there gaps in the priorities (ex: decarbonize electricity and transportation, limit methane emissions, advance nature-based climate solutions, etc.)?

Employee-to-employee organizing can make workers feel good and feel proud that they’re not just fighting for their own company to support climate policy.
They’re also helping build worker power overall to create an expectation for corporations to actively advocate for climate policy.

Think systematically about your desired ends and the means it will take to get there.

Community volunteer work and hosting educational seminars are common in employee sustainability groups and Employee Resource Groups. This is a
starting point, and more is possible. Some companies have linked employee-based sustainability groups as advisors to areas of the business such as facilities, transportation, human resources, or other parts of the business. Doing this brings the voice of employees into business decision-making. For example, the employee advisors may inquire why the company does not have an electronic device recycling program or state a preference for a public transportation stipend as a trade-off for another company benefit.

When you have an employee network, it’s easier to be influential and represent many employee voices. At this point, you should revisit the case for change formed during the discussions with internal stakeholders in the power map you created. Create a small working group of like-minded people who are passionate about the issue. You’ll be stronger and more effective as a team.

How I came to work on climate issues

SAP is a global provider of enterprise software. Before working for the company, sustainability was part of my job. When I got to SAP, I started pushing for customer engagements centered around sustainability. SAP was interested in environmentally conscious projects early on and provides technology to manage and measure sustainability metrics. I also work as a Lead Champion for our sustainability employee group. This is an internal program where employees organize themselves to have sustainable practices inside the company. At SAP, we act as sustainability exemplars with our actions and enablers with our products. Additionally, SAP sponsors internal sustainability initiatives every year. Employees all over the world apply for their local sustainability initiatives ideas.

My advice for other workplace climate champions

When you are getting started, create a sense of community. Create (or find) a group where people are engaged and want to do something. Nurture people’s personal interests to create motivation.
Companies will respond when lots of employees come together to demand change. What we have learned through our work at Amazon is that we do have power to influence what Amazon does, but only if we all work together. If companies like Amazon are forced by its own employees to go further faster, that also sets the stage for other companies to follow.

Society Watch: The rise of employee climate activism (Reuters, 3/31/2022)

As many as two in five employees in medium-size and large firms have engaged in employee activism of some kind: 38 percent said that they have “spoken up to support or criticize [their] employer’s actions over a controversial issue that affects society.

Employee Activism In The Age Of Purpose: Employees (up)rising
Advocate. For. Action.

Techniques to advocate for change will vary depending on the company culture and where the organization fits in the maturity curve.

As mentioned previously, actions that rely more on persuasion and “issue selling” to internal decision-makers are generally more effective catalysts for change than disruptive tactics. Begin by creating a small working group of 2-3 co-workers with common interests who are eager to make a difference. Between the internal power mapping exercise and engaging co-workers in the employee sustainability group, you’ll know who to approach. Together, build your case for change.

Prepare the necessary information

Climate policy is one of many areas where employees can advocate for change. For example, many employees advocate for the removal of fossil fuel funds in their company retirement accounts. Visit the FixMyFunds campaign or Sphere to learn more about how to add climate-friendly options to your investment portfolio.

Another great example, WorkForClimate has a playbook detailing how to advocate for a safe (green) retirement plan. While the material is specific to employee retirement plans, the framework outlined can be used to advocate for change on any issue. The WorkForClimate playbook lists the key elements of a proposal to make a business case. These include:

Some employees advocate for the removal of fossil fuel funds in their company retirement accounts.
The framework can also be used to define the solution. Where there are gaps in corporate advocacy, trade association representation, or inadequate spending allocation on top climate priorities, this forms the basis of the “ask”. The AAA Framework for Climate Policy Leadership suggests how to be a leader in each of these areas. For example, if the company has a trade association membership that is misaligned, the options are to publicly distance, work to change their position, or (if all else fails) leave the membership.

It’s persuasive to point out that Gen Z (and to an extent Millennials) are more likely to make employment and purchasing decisions based on the company’s public stance on climate. Providing statistics to back up the reasoning may help. You could also use examples of other areas where employee-led efforts have led many corporations to take progressive positions on such issues as diversity and inclusion or the Respect for Marriage Act. If your company has taken any diversity stands historically, you could consider articulating the connection between social justice and climate justice.

**TIPS FOR AN EFFECTIVE PITCH**

1. Include a strong opening and clear ask on page one
2. Include a strong why statement; Why is this critical now?

Use examples of other areas where employee-led efforts have led many corporations to take progressive positions on such issues as diversity and inclusion or the Respect for Marriage Act.
Step Four: Advocate for Action

Make the Pitch

Once your working group has a proposal ready, set up a meeting with the executive decision-maker or influencer. Send the proposal in advance and create summary material for the discussion. You could also consider drafting a letter on behalf of the employee network you built and gathering signatures. If constructively worded, this can be valuable supplementary material to help get the meeting and be taken seriously. Persistence is the key to success. Getting a commitment to change will likely take more than just one meeting.

Persistence is the key to success. Getting a commitment to change will likely take more than just one meeting.

Sounds simple enough, right? To be honest, it is anything but easy. Many employees understandably have limited experience and knowledge of corporate lobbying. Arranging business meetings on a topic outside our area of expertise can be uncomfortable. Moreover, a topic like this can be sensitive, and few corporate cultures promote employee advocacy.

That’s why it’s vitally important that the approach and tone you use are aligned with your company culture, and that your “ask” is based on research gathered from those closest to the real issues. Your goal for this meeting should be to leave it with your next step confirmed.

Why Can’t Companies Do More on Climate Policy?

Top Reasons You’ll Hear and Suggested Rebuttals – An FAQ with ClimateVoice Founder Bill Weihl

find it on page 29
STEP FOUR: ADVOCATE FOR ACTION

After the Pitch

1. **Send a follow-up**
   Recap the discussion and action items, share gratitude for the opportunity to come to the table, and ask for sponsorship.

2. **Debrief with your community**
   Discuss what worked, what didn’t work, and what was missed. Identify best practices and additional steps to take.

3. **Act on your next step sooner than later**
   Keep the momentum, and don’t be disparaged if you hit a roadblock. If your target feels out of reach, focus on achieving small wins until you can regroup on the larger issues.

How I came to work on climate issues

Let your passion show and be prepared. If you are part of an existing community or team, use them as a sounding board. If you have a more senior sponsor of an internal team, use them to practice your pitch. And beyond the need to solve the issue, consider the benefits to the company or stakeholders you are pitching to. Think of it as making a business case. And most importantly, act with the intent to make progress, not solve the entire problem. This can help prevent you from overshooting and getting your idea shot down.

My advice for other workplace climate champions

If your organization has an employee sustainability or climate community, join it, evolve it, and make an impact. If it doesn’t, find out if your company has made any public commitments on climate and goals around what it needs to do internally to achieve those commitments. Then, see how you can get involved.

Patrick Feder

*Deloitte Consulting LLP, Managing Director*

Read the disclaimer from Deloitte®
Why Can’t Companies Do More on Climate Policy? Top Reasons You’ll Hear and Suggested Rebuttal

To help you prepare for this crucial conversation, ClimateVoice founder Bill Weihl — a corporate sustainability veteran and someone previously in the Chief Sustainability Officer seat — has weighed in on the common responses you may hear from executives on why companies don’t want to, shouldn’t, or can’t do more on climate policy.

“We’re already doing so much to clean up our operations and supply chain.”

- We know - and that work is vital. It’s part of why I’m proud to work here.
- And: society needs to move much faster to scale climate solutions - including the ones we have helped pioneer.
- Voluntary action, by us and others, won’t move the needle fast enough.
- We also need public policy - at the city, state, and national levels.
- Investing to support public policy isn’t “instead of” the other amazing work we’re doing, it’s in addition.

“We have critical business issues to address with policymakers; we can’t use our lobbying firepower on issues that aren’t core to our business”

- Our CEO and CSO have said many times that climate change is a looming and urgent crisis, and we all need to do everything we can to address it at scale.
- (For some companies: execs have publicly said that they support the UN and various governments in strengthening public policy - they need to back up those statements with strong advocacy)
- Large companies like ours have real influence on public policy. We get that this isn’t simple, and that weighing in forcefully on a controversial issue
may carry some risk. Unmitigated climate change is an even bigger risk - to everyone. I (we) are really proud to work here - especially because of the leadership role we’re playing on climate action. Our (near) silence (or limited engagement) on public policy is a problem, because it’s letting special interests delay, weaken, and sometimes kill important public policies.

- We and many colleagues want our company to step up and help scale climate solutions much faster. That requires supportive public policies - to help us meet our own climate commitments, and to ensure we all avoid the worst impacts of the climate crisis.

“**We prefer to focus on what we do best – using our tech superpowers to solve problems**”

- There are things where we can uniquely make a difference - and it’s amazing how much we have already accomplished.
- At the same time, we and many other companies have enormous power to influence public policy. When we don’t use it, special interests win. And that is putting my future at risk - and the future of this company.
- I want to live in a world with clean air, clean water, and a stable climate for everyone.
- The reality of the political dynamic around climate policy is that a small part of the business community - the oil & gas sector, parts of the chemicals sector, and some major trade associations - is exercising undue influence over policy outcomes. They can do that because most companies that would like different outcomes are silent.
- We should absolutely use our superpowers - where we can uniquely make a difference. And we should work with others to ensure that we collectively make progress on climate policy to drive the rapid systemic change that’s needed.

“**We don’t want to demonize or penalize any particular company or sector**”

- We don’t have to talk about climate in a way that demonizes anyone, even if some of us might feel that way personally.
- At the same time, society needs to cut emissions quickly. Emissions from burning fossil fuels comprise the vast majority of GHGs. So we have to start cutting back on burning fossil fuels. Now, not in 5 or 10 years.
- Some say we can wait, and rely on CCS or DAC in the future. But all the scenarios from the UN, the IEA, and others show that CCS and DAC will be important, but won’t make a big difference for at least 10-15 years, maybe longer. We can’t afford to wait that long.
- This isn’t about demonizing fossil fuel companies. We all rely on them. But we
need them to shift to become clean energy companies. Some of them are taking small steps in that direction, but most are not shifting at all.

- We can talk about the public policies we support that will clean up the grid, electrify transportation and buildings, support transit and other things that save energy and reduce emissions, without demonizing oil & gas.
- Large companies like ours have real influence on public policy. We get that this isn’t simple, and that weighing in forcefully on a controversial issue may carry some risk. Unmitigated climate change is an even bigger risk - to everyone. I (we) are really proud to work here - especially because of the leadership role we’re playing on climate action. Our (near) silence (or limited engagement) on public policy is a problem, because it’s letting special interests delay, weaken, and sometimes kill important public policies.
- We and many colleagues want our company to step up and help scale climate solutions much faster. That requires supportive public policies - to help us meet our own climate commitments, and to ensure we all avoid the worst impacts of the climate crisis.

“We join groups like the U.S. Chamber of Commerce for many reasons. They help us with core business issues. We don’t agree with them on everything, but we need them to go to bat for us on core concerns. If we push them on climate, they might not support us when we need them.”

- There are things where we can uniquely make a difference - and it’s amazing how much we have already accomplished.
- At the same time, we and many other companies have enormous power to influence public policy. When we don’t use it, special interests win. And that is putting my future at risk - and the future of this company.
- I want to live in a world with clean air, clean water, and a stable climate for everyone.
- The reality of the political dynamic around climate policy is that a small part of the business community - the oil & gas sector, parts of the chemicals sector, and some major trade associations - is exercising undue influence over policy outcomes. They can do that because most companies that would like different outcomes are silent.
- We should absolutely use our superpowers - where we can uniquely make a difference. And we should work with others to ensure that we collectively make progress on climate policy to drive the rapid systemic change that’s needed.
“The Chamber says it supports climate policy. It’s just against higher taxes, and big government programs.”

- InfluenceMap has analyzed the Chamber’s public statements on climate, and on specific proposed policies. It has found that the Chamber’s high-level public statements have gotten more nuanced, and no longer deny the reality of climate change or the need for policy. But its actual lobbying continues to be almost exclusively obstructionist.
- And if society needs to spend some money on climate solutions, who should pay? We’re an incredibly successful company with a lot of money. We can afford to pay a bit more.
- We’ll only solve as gnarly a problem as climate if we all compromise. Including on taxes.

“We don’t believe that government policy will make a big difference. The private sector can solve this problem more effectively – with innovation, and private investment.”

- Even Bill Gates has acknowledged that the government has a vital role to play. Not instead of the private sector, but in partnership with it.
- Historically, government policies have played a big part in driving down the costs of wind, solar, batteries, and EVs. Government funding of R&D has been vital in the early stages of each of these. Policies like Renewable Portfolio Standards, Feed-In Tariffs, and clean car mandates have driven faster deployment of clean tech - and growth in deployment has driven down costs.
- At a 2022 NYT climate event, when discussing what effective leadership to overcome climate challenges looks like, Brad Smith explicitly mentioned the need for policy to accelerate progress and ended his interview with the statement “Microsoft is pro climate regulation.”
To decarbonize at the speed and scale required, public policy is necessary to accelerate change.

Companies have the responsibility, the opportunity, and the ability to use their enormous influence in support of climate policies, across all sectors of the economy, and everywhere they operate. And employees have the power to get their companies off the sidelines in these critical policy debates.

ClimateVoice aims to leverage the power of corporate influence from climate-positive companies to help win crucial climate policy battles. The ClimateVoice Climate Policy Guide is here for you as a resource to guide you in advocating for the most urgently needed climate policy solutions of our time.

Thank you for your work in advocating for climate leadership and action in your organization and beyond.

Questions? Contact us anytime at info@climatevoice.org.

Special thanks to Mary Dube and Mandy Maxwell for spearheading this project. ClimateVoice is grateful to all the employees who shared their insights including Verda Alexander, Patrick Feder, Arielle Terry, Carolina Robertson and Drew Wilkinson. Thank you for your contributions in bringing this toolkit to fellow employees.
Key Resources

**ClimateVoice**

**Connect the Dots**
Learn the basics of how and why companies influence policy making, how this connects to climate, best practices from leading businesses, and how you can personally make a difference.

**Escape the Chamber**
Learn about how and why companies should leave the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and lead on climate policy.

**ClimateVoice Policy Guide**
Learn more about why policy is a critical lever for change, which investments are most effective, and how corporations can use their influence to address the climate crisis at scale.

Additional Reading

**Analysis of Corporate Reviews on Industry Associations’ Climate Policy Engagement** from InfluenceMap

**How to Write an Impactful Corporate Climate Statement** from WRI

**Job Function Action Guides** from Drawdown Labs

**Responsible Climate Lobbying: The Global Standard** from a collaboration of investor networks and asset managers

**Responsible Policy Engagement Analysis 2022** from Ceres

**AAA Framework** - Creating a science-based climate policy agenda that advocates for and aligns trade associations with policies for net-zero emissions by 2050, and allocates money to advance climate policies.

**Drawdown Labs** - A consortium of visionary private sector partners working to go beyond “net zero” to scale climate solutions worldwide, within and outside their own operations.

**Climate Reality Project** - Accelerating a just transition to clean energy by recruiting, training, and mobilizing people to become powerful activists. “4 A’s of Climate Leadership” guide from We Mean Business Coalition
Schedule a 30-minute coaching session with a ClimateVoice team member.

We’ll arrange a session 1:1 or for a group of interested employees to help get your workplace advocacy kicked off and destined for success.

Contact

References

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ClimateVoice aims to leverage the power of corporate influence from climate-positive companies to help win crucial climate policy battles.

Our unique mission is to mobilize the voice of the workforce to urge companies to go “all in” on climate, both in business practices and in policy advocacy. We believe employee engagement is the key lever to propel corporate action. When employees speak up as a group, and urge companies to advocate on climate policy, it catalyzes change at the highest levels.

ClimateVoice is a project of Tides Center, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. Learn more at climatevoice.org, and donate to support ClimateVoice’s work here.