

The Legislative Challenge

Katherine Rogers, The Earth Day Network

I can't stress enough how important it is that the Faith communities join us in our mission towards a fair, ambitious, and comprehensive climate bill. In the past when we tried to present our concerns to Congress as environmental groups, members of congress were not engaged. I will be in a conversation with Earth Day Network's Vice-President Susan Bass, who has done our religious outreach for a long time, and I've said, "Look, we've got to go up to The Hill, and we'll get several environmental groups and we'll go up and we'll pitch them." Then she kind of smiles and says



Kathleen Rogers, President of the Earth Day Network, has worked more than 20 years as an environmental attorney and advocate, focusing on public policy, international law, litigation, and community development.

"well, if you want to end up with the Legislative Assistant, let's do it that way [with] the environmental groups. If we want to see the Senator or the member of Congress, let's call the Faith community because then they will listen." They are afraid of you.

They are shaking in their boots! I remember one meeting Susan put together with the religious leaders. We didn't go to the legislative assistant anymore, we went to Speaker Pelosi and we get carried in. When the faith community is present, the whole thing changes. The whole dynamic changes, because you represent something that they can't buy. They can't lobby you and they aren't getting money from you, unless it's in your personal capacity. You represent a powerful force, one they can't see and one they can't deal with.

This is because they are used to dealing with money in politics, and you represent something that destroys their equilibrium and puts them on uncertain ground, on thin ice, and that's the beauty of the people in this room. If I were going to make a long speech today - which I promise I won't - it would be entitled "Why the climate movement is ready to fight and why the faith and the religious communities can lead us in that fight." I know we're not supposed to be

negative, we're supposed to be positive, and in this room I get a feeling of enormous power, of untapped power. You all know exactly what the science is. You know what is going on, but why would I choose you to be the environmental leaders more than the environmental community?

I think that is because you believe in God or a higher power. You believe that that God or higher power created the Earth. You believe that your faith requires you to protect it. More importantly, in these days of disinformation and money, you believe in science and that the science is God's way of telling us that it is time to fight and time to act.

So I invite all of you for the Earth, for God, for spiritual life, to be with us on Earth Day, April 25th on the Mall. The real actions are the people and the people who haven't had a voice. When you started putting this together, we had a very different landscape. We had been planning the 40th anniversary of Earth Day for two years and it was about implementing what we hoped would come out of Copenhagen. Unfortunately nothing came out of Copenhagen.

The only answer was to do something. We can start now at this breakfast, we can start after. I really hope that many of you will work with us and the other members of the environmental community to get the message out to do an Earth Day weekend. We've been doing Earth Day Sunday. We've been working with you in Washington and other cities in the United States, and 194 countries to let people know that we have to do something new and something now.

Thank you very much for being here. We were really completely happy to do what we could do on the preparation for this important event. Clearly the magic, the action, God is with us in this room telling us we need to do something.

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