

{FROM THE PRESIDENT}

## Success on the West Coast



© Richard Howard

Earlier this year, the UCS California office showed just how powerful old-fashioned education and advocacy can be in working with state

legislatures. Our experts held workshops on pressing topics such as global warming emissions in the electricity and transportation sectors for California lawmakers. Because of California's term limits, many legislators there are relatively new and unfamiliar with the benefits of their state's groundbreaking policies to combat global warming. We also drafted and circulated a white paper outlining the need for groundwater regulation in California, and mobilized our Science Network and other supporters to push for specific legislation.

With our input, the California legislature enacted *five* important environmental laws this summer, including a bill to regulate groundwater withdrawal, and a new financing mechanism to put 1 million electric vehicles on the road by 2025. On top of that, UCS helped defeat the oil industry's attempt to exempt itself from California's cap-and-trade program for carbon emissions. The moral of the story? Even in a polarized and hyper-partisan era, we can get great results when we present facts and science to our elected leaders in a compelling way.

KEN KIMMELL

{CLOSE TO HOME}

## A Cooler Smarter House



© Ben Caron

Reading the UCS book *Cooler Smarter* inspired UCS member Ben Caron to take many steps to make his house more energy efficient, including the addition of solar panels to his roof.

Soon after UCS member Ben Caron and his family moved into their Massachusetts home 12 years ago, he swapped out the heating system and water heater with more efficient systems, and installed compact fluorescent lightbulbs and programmable thermostats. But as he kept hearing about extreme weather, sea level rise, and other impacts of global warming that are already being felt, he wanted to do more. When his 10-year-old son, Joey, brought home the UCS book *Cooler Smarter: Practical Steps for Low-Carbon Living* from his school library, Caron said, "I devoured it, and then we talked about what we could do."

### HIS LEAKS ARE SEALED

As *Cooler Smarter* (online at [www.ucsusa.org/cooler-smarter](http://www.ucsusa.org/cooler-smarter)) explains, electricity use accounts for about 15 percent of a household's total annual global warming emissions. Since renewable electricity—whether purchased through your utility or generated at home—can make a big dent in this total, Caron took the plunge and installed solar photovoltaic panels on his roof. He also set out to make his house as efficient as possible.

Using advice from the book, he installed sensors on basement and outdoor fixtures to keep lights from being left on inadvertently, plugged entertainment center electronics into a power strip to keep them from drawing electricity in standby mode, and installed an energy-efficient pump with a built-in timer for his outdoor pool. (An engineer and do-it-yourselfer, Caron also rigged a system that circulates pool water through heat-absorbing tubes on the surrounding fence, allowing the sun to heat his pool at no extra cost.)

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# Impressive Reach for UCS Palm Oil Campaign



© Shutterstock/carolanne

Since the release this spring of our palm oil “scorecard” (titled *Donuts, Deodorant, Deforestation*), which rated companies based on their commitment (or lack thereof) to sourcing palm oil that minimizes tropical deforestation, UCS has been working hard to press the case. All told, our members and supporters have sent a whopping 753,000 separate letters urging some of the world’s biggest brands to improve their policies.

The results have been dramatic: 12 of the companies we’ve targeted have now pledged to use only traceable, deforestation-free palm oil in their products. The impressive list comprises Colgate-Palmolive, ConAgra, Danone, Dunkin’ Brands, General Mills, Hershey, Kao, Kellogg’s, Krispy Kreme, PepsiCo, Procter & Gamble, and L’Oréal. And we won’t be stopping there; see more of our targets at [www.ucsusa.org/palmoilscorecard](http://www.ucsusa.org/palmoilscorecard).

## UCS Helps Spur Corporate Exodus from ALEC

In a welcome development earlier this fall, Facebook announced that it would end its membership in the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC), a group that has attacked clean energy policies in more than a dozen states.

UCS targeted Facebook because the company was claiming to support the rapid growth of renewable energy while simultaneously funding ALEC’s work to undermine it. Our members and supporters responded by sending thousands of emails to Facebook calling on the company to sever its ties with ALEC. Facebook is the newest addition to the list of more than 80 corporations, including fellow technology companies Microsoft and Yahoo, that have cut off their support of ALEC in recent years amid increased scrutiny over the group’s anti-climate efforts.

## FAST FACTS

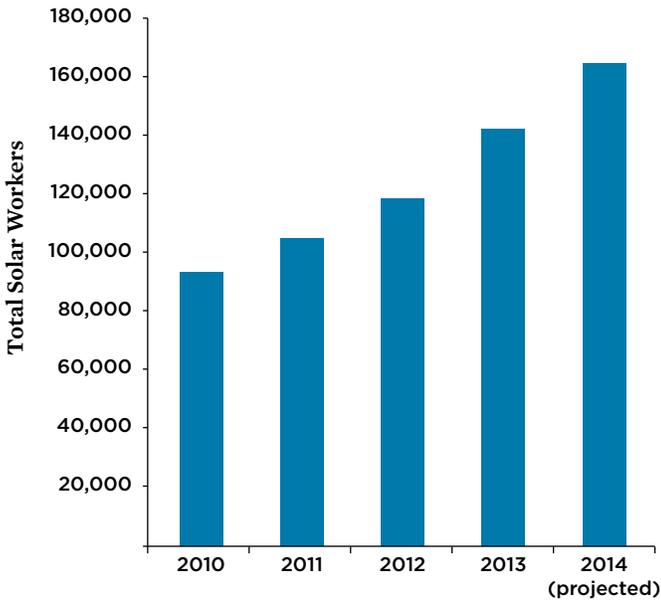
### Solar power’s hidden benefits

Rooftop solar photovoltaic systems don’t just benefit the people who purchase and install them.

- On hot, sunny days when demand for air conditioning is high, power from rooftop systems can help utilities meet peak electricity demand without having to fire up seldom-used, less efficient fossil-fuel-fired power plants that are more polluting and drive up consumers’ electricity costs.
- Because homes and businesses with rooftop systems don’t rely completely on the grid for electricity, utilities can sometimes postpone expensive distribution infrastructure upgrades.
- Rooftop systems can be installed anywhere, creating job opportunities everywhere. In 2013 the U.S. solar industry employed more than 140,000 people—a 53 percent increase over 2010.

Dramatic reductions in price, innovative financing opportunities, and forward-thinking policies are making solar power an increasingly affordable option for people who want to support the growth of clean electricity. Learn more at [www.ucsusa.org/solarpowerontherise](http://www.ucsusa.org/solarpowerontherise).

U.S. Solar Job Growth, 2010–2014



Solar-related jobs, from manufacturing to installation, have increased by an average of 15 percent annually in recent years. More than three-quarters of the workers added in 2013 were for new positions.

NOTE: The Solar Foundation defines solar workers as those who spend at least half of their time supporting solar-related activities.

SOURCE: THE SOLAR FOUNDATION 2014.

## ASK THE SCIENTIST

### Why don't Americans follow the government's recommendations and eat a healthier diet with more fruits and vegetables?

—Suzanne Burke, Canton, MA

**Jeffrey O'Hara**, agricultural economist in the UCS Food and Environment Program, responds:



© Sanjay Suchak

One major obstacle is that U.S. policies artificially inflate the price of fruits and vegetables. These policies have their origin in the

1930s, when the government would offer loans to farmers raising “commodity” crops such as corn and wheat that could be stored and resold if farmers defaulted; perishable fruits and vegetables were ineligible.

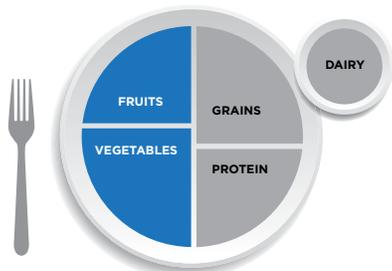
While the government no longer stores crops, production subsidies for commodity crops are still in force, largely due to agribusiness lobbying. These programs not only pour money into commodity crops—a projected \$140 billion over the next 10 years—they also restrict the ability of farmers to

grow fruits and vegetables. As a result of these and other factors, prices for fresh produce have risen twice as much as overall food prices over the last 60 years.

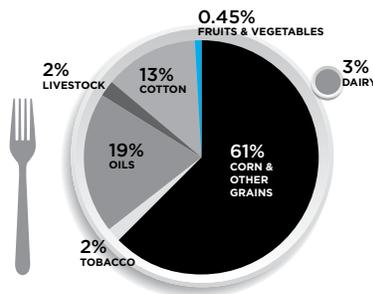
Lack of access to healthy food is a problem, too. For example, the National School Lunch Program, which provides free and reduced-cost lunches to children, is an important source of fruits and vegetables for children from lower-income backgrounds. But agribusiness interests are attempting to weaken school lunch standards that encourage increased fruit and vegetable consumption, while supporting the continuation of large contracts with food service corporations that focus primarily on processed foods. This is a particular problem given that dietary preferences and patterns are often formed in childhood.

Taxpayers' dollars should be spent on healthy food, not junk food. That's why UCS is working to promote smart investments that can help farmers grow and sell more fruits and vegetables, and make this food more affordable and accessible to low-income families. When Congress renews the legislation funding school lunches next year, we will push to get more healthy food on kids' trays. Learn more at [www.ucsusa.org/food](http://www.ucsusa.org/food).

### Government Recommendations and Subsidies Don't Line Up



U.S. Dietary Recommendations



Agriculture Subsidies 2008-2012

The federal government recommends that half our dietary intake come from fruits and vegetables, but most government agricultural subsidies go toward junk food ingredients. Learn how UCS is working to support healthy food production at [www.ucsusa.org/food](http://www.ucsusa.org/food).

SOURCE: ADAPTED FROM U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE (LEFT) AND OFFICE OF REP. CHELLIE PINGREE (RIGHT).

## JOIN THE CONVERSATION

### Coastal Residents Confront Rising Tides



© Michael Ein/Press of Atlantic City

For our recent report *Encroaching Tides: How Sea Level Rise and Tidal Flooding Threaten U.S. East and Gulf Coast Communities over the Next 30 Years*, UCS analyzed data from government tide gauges in 52 coastal communities stretching from Portland, ME, to Freeport, TX. The findings are stark.

For most of the communities analyzed, we found that as sea levels rise, floods resulting from high tides could triple in 15 years and increase 10-fold in 30 years compared with historic levels. In 30 years'

*Floods resulting from high tides could triple in 15 years.*

time, half of these communities could face more than 100 floods a year—the equivalent of eight every month—potentially rendering flood-prone areas unusable. To read the report and learn how you can help make coastal communities more resilient, go to [www.ucsusa.org/encroachingtides](http://www.ucsusa.org/encroachingtides).

## A Cooler Smarter House

(continued from front page)

Because heating and cooling comprise about 17 percent of household global warming emissions, Caron added insulation to the attic and exterior walls, and sealed air leaks around walls and joints with foil tape. Combined with new Energy Star windows and doors, the single-story house is so efficient that even on the hottest day this past summer, he didn't need

**Caron added insulation, sealed air leaks, and installed new Energy Star windows and doors. Now his house is so efficient that even on the hottest summer day, he didn't need air conditioning.**

air conditioning. He hopes to install small heat pumps this fall that will allow the excess electricity generated by his solar panels to provide heat, avoiding the need for natural gas on all but the coldest days.

### TAKING THE LONG VIEW

"It can be hard to spend more on energy-efficient products," Caron says when asked about the challenges he faced. But he adds that it's important to think about your long-term return on investment. His pool pump, for example, cost three times more than a standard pump but paid for itself within a year, and will continue saving money—and minimizing emissions—for years to come. "If I'm replacing something," he says, "I want to do it right the first time."

Caron credits *Cooler Smarter* for putting him on this path. "Without the book," he said, "I might not have realized how many energy-saving strategies were out there." Armed with this knowledge, he has inspired friends and colleagues to embark on their own energy-saving projects: a neighbor switched from incandescent to LED lighting, and four of his colleagues have installed solar panels.

He's also making an impression on the next generation. "My son is as excited as I am, if not more so, about saving energy," Caron says. "We've made it a game to see how little electricity we can use. When he walks into a room, he asks, 'Do we really need all these lights on?'"

## MAKE YOUR OPINION COUNT

If you haven't already done so, be sure to complete and return the 2014 UCS Member Survey we recently mailed to you. It's your chance to let us know how you think we're doing, and to tell us which issues you're most concerned about. We truly value your opinions, so please share them with us!



**Union of Concerned Scientists**  
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FIND THIS ISSUE ONLINE: [www.ucsusa.org/earthwise](http://www.ucsusa.org/earthwise)

The Union of Concerned Scientists puts rigorous, independent science to work to solve our planet's most pressing problems. Joining with citizens across the country, we combine technical analysis and effective advocacy to create innovative, practical solutions for a healthy, safe, and sustainable future.

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