Good Card, Bad Card Handout 3

**Used with permission from Dana Meiter**

**Raw Material**

In preparation for the topic, *Resolved: The United States federal government should adopt a carbon tax,* let’s examine a piece of an article produced by the Congressional Budget office:

Neither the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) nor the staff of the Joint Committee on Taxation has published an estimate of how much revenue a carbon tax might produce. However, CBO has extensively analyzed policies, known as cap-and-trade programs, that would similarly set a price on CO2 emissions. Those analyses suggest that a carbon tax that covered the bulk of CO2 emissions or the carbon content of most fossil fuel consumed in the United States could generate a substantial amount of revenue. For example, in 2011, CBO estimated that a cap-and-trade program that would have set a price of $20 in 2012 to emit a ton of CO2 (and increased that price by 5.6 percent each year thereafter) would raise a total of nearly $1.2 trillion during its first decade. In addition, total U.S. emissions of CO2 would be about 8 percent lower over that period than they would be without the policy, CBO estimated.

Source: Dinan, Terry. [Senior Advisor at the Congressional Budget Office] “Effects of a Carbon Tax on the Economy and Environment.” Congressional Budget Office. 2013. Web. Accessed January 2, 2016. (p.1-2)

Cutting: Aim for a short card with only the most important information.

**BAD CUT: (starts on sentence three of raw material above)**

Those analyses suggest that a carbon tax that covered the bulk of CO2 emissions or the carbon content of most fossil fuel consumed in the United States could generate a substantial amount of revenue. : Dinan, Terry. [Senior Advisor at the Congressional Budget Office] “Effects of a Carbon Tax on the Economy and Environment.” Congressional Budget Office. 2013. Web. Accessed January 2, 2016. (p.1-2)

*Why is this a poorly cut card?*

1. The text says “suggests” a tax “could” generate revenue. An opponent will immediately point out the speculative nature of the statement.
2. NO concrete information is highlighted.

**BETTER CUT: (beginning in sentence four of the raw material) This material includes actual numeric estimates made by the CBO.**

For example, in 2011, CBO estimated that a cap-and-trade program that would have set a price of $20 in 2012 to emit a ton of CO2 (and increased that price by 5.6 percent each year thereafter) would raise a total of nearly $1.2 trillion during its first decade. In addition, total U.S. emissions of CO2 would be about 8 percent lower over that period than they would be without the policy, CBO estimated. : Dinan, Terry. [Senior Advisor at the Congressional Budget Office] “Effects of a Carbon Tax on the Economy and Environment.” Congressional Budget Office. 2013. Web. Accessed January 2, 2016. (p.1-2)

**Tagging the card:**

Note that the source material indicates the estimates of revenue and emissions decrease were based on analysis of cap-and-trade programs, not straight tax programs. Even though the source material then goes on to say that a postulate what carbon tax might produce in terms of revenue and positive impact to the environment. However, the material clearly indicates that the postulate was made based on models from cap-and-trade. A debater can use either carbon tax or cap-and-trade in their tags, but if using “carbon tax” the debater must be prepared to answer a well-informed opponent who probably has this same research and knows that the estimates were based on a cap-and-trade system.

**Possible tags for this card are:**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Well-constructed tags**  Good tags should include directive language and summarize what is in the card with language that provide links to greater impacts. Example: a tax that generates over a trillion will benefit the government in a multitude of ways any of which the Pro could exploit as advantageous impacts. | ***Cap-and-trade produces substantial revenue***  (this tag correctly sites the type of carbon taxing system mentioned in the source material and points to the positive impact) |
| ***Cap-and-trade generates over a trillion dollars***  (this tag correctly sites the type of carbon taxing system and points to the SPECIFIC numeric positive impact) |
| ***Cap-and-trade reduces emissions and generates over $1 trillion*** (this tag correctly sites the type of carbon taxing system and points to the SPECIFIC numeric positive impact AND this card points the main reason we might want to implement a carbon tax, in other words what the resolution is seeking to solve – reduce carbon emissions) |
| **Mediocre tag** | ***Carbon tax increases government revenue***  Not specific enough |
| **Poor tags** | ***Carbon tax is good***  (problems with this tag are twofold: 1. The evidence sited does not point to any moral valuation, 2. This tag is much too general. It does not indicate the real impacts of the card and why it is important to the case) |
| ***Carbon tax makes money***  (this is not a good tag because the source material says that the estimates for the revenue were made from a cap-and-trade model which is DIFFERENT than a carbon tax model. In fact, the opposing team in this debate may well be arguing that a carbon tax is not the answer but cap-and-trade is, in which case this tag (and card) feeds the opposing case. |
| ***Cap-and-trade could significantly help offset the national deficit***  (this statement is not supported at all by the evidence in the card because the card does not reference the deficit or offsetting it at all. The tag should NOT be analysis. It is a bullet describing the content of the card.) |
| ***A carbon tax will help the government by earning a lot of money and it will also help the environment by reducing emissions which will reduce global warming***  (too long, not a tag!) |