



JAMM AQUINO / JAQUINO@STARADVERTISER.COM

An electric vehicle was being charged at a Volta EV station inside the Ward Village Theatre parking complex.

Carbon tax expensive, does little good

By Clint Churchill
and Lindsey Dymond

Two little-known bills in Hawaii's Legislature propose to enact a massive tax increase called "carbon tax." The proposed tax is framed to somehow cause a decrease in the use of fossil fuels (like gasoline), because gasoline will become so expensive, you will either curtail driving or buy an electric car. Or to somehow hurry Hawaiian Electric along in the conversion to renewable energy.

To help sell this attempt to change behavior, House Bill 2278 and Senate Bill 2732 slide in a rebate "scheme." You supposedly get much of the tax back — all taxpayers in the same category would get the same dollar credit when filing their tax return. But if you are a high mileage driver due to the distance you drive to work, you will be a net loser. And if you don't drive at all, the scheme will be an undeserved tax windfall. The net effect is that the state will be some sort of middle-man Robin Hood to punish your gas station, Hawaiian Electric, Hawaii Gas, your restaurant and other businesses — but the reality is that this tax will be passed on to the consumer by all of these providers.

Climate change is real, as should be obvious to all. But we cannot tax our way out of it, and these bills will do nothing but raise the cost of living for Hawaii's residents. Our federal government has considered, but not passed, a carbon tax. No U.S. state

has implemented a carbon tax. The time has come for Hawaii's residents to rise up and resist the enactment of this tax that will impact all of us, yet have a tiny, perhaps unmeasurable, impact on world climate change.

Why would any consumer think this a good idea? In 2012, Australia implemented such a tax but repealed it just two years after it produced the highest quarterly increase in household electricity prices in the country's history. British Columbia implemented such a tax in 2007 that was supposed to reduce emissions by 33% by now. The result? Emissions today are 4% higher but carbon taxes are costing taxpayers billions. Taxing to change behavior is a harsh way to treat our people, but especially if it has no productive effect.

The proposed tax would be applied to every petroleum category, including diesel, jet fuel, aviation gas, propane. So you'll not only pay more for gasoline and electricity, but air travel and anything that moves on a commercial truck.

If the Legislature chooses to implement this tax, it's placing a higher priority on chasing an illusion — trying to keep the increase in world tem-

ISLAND VOICES



Kailua resident
Clint Churchill, top,
and Waimanalo
resident Lindsey
Dymond represent
the Practical Policy
Institute of Hawaii.

perature some 80 years from now to not more than 2 degrees — as opposed to a real problem, the cost of living in Hawaii.

We all know that the majority of Hawaii's residents struggle to make ends meet. We also know we pay the highest cost per kilowatt hour in the country for electricity. And Hawaii pays the highest cost per gallon of gasoline of any state. Why make it even harder to make ends meet — a problem that has caused a five-year out-migration of residents from our state?

Hawaii does need a practical plan for climate change, and we're making good progress. But we do

not need to try to fix global problems by a tax that attempts to force us to use cars less or get a much more expensive electric vehicle. There are just over 1 million vehicles in Hawaii, with less than 1.6% being electric. It should be our right to decide how important these global issues are to us.

The inescapable conclusion is that this tax will add to the cost of living for well over half of Hawaii's residents, while doing nothing to overcome the effects of climate change in Hawaii. The Legislature should be addressing real problems, not adding to the challenges we already face.