

**UUCE Sunday Worship Service
October 11, 2015
Turn and Face the Change**

James Fisher

**Your silence during the prelude, offertory and postlude is greatly appreciated.
Large print hymnals and assistive listening are available. Please ask the ushers.**

Gathering music:

Rissa Moore

Welcome, Announcements, Welcome Visitors:

Board Member

Ringing Bell:

James Fisher

Thank you for being here today, visitors, stalwarts, fair weather friends. We are carrying forth a tradition, meeting this Sunday, here to worship, to share our thoughts and to tend the garden, our liberal religious tradition. We hoist a beacon of light, shining across land and sea to our brothers and sisters on retreat at Ferry Beach. May our short time together provide some measure of retreat and reflection.

Prelude:

Call to Worship Morning #438

Responsive Reading

Chalice lighting

Congregation

*We light this chalice, for the light of truth,
We light this chalice, for the warmth of love,
We light this chalice, for the fire of commitment.
We light this chalice, as a symbol of our faith, as we gather together.*

Opening hymn: #118 *This Little Light of Mine*

A Time for All Ages – Season, Change,

James Fisher

Readings

“Whatever you do, you need courage. Whatever course you decide upon, there is always someone to tell you that you are wrong. There are always difficulties arising that tempt you to believe your critics are right. To map out a course of action and follow it to an end requires some of the same courage that a soldier needs. Peace has its victories, but it takes brave men and women to win them.”

– [Ralph Waldo Emerson](#)

As a single footstep will not make a path on the earth, so a single thought will not make a pathway in the mind. To make a deep physical path, we walk again and again. To make a deep mental path, we must think over and over the kind of thoughts we wish to dominate our lives.

Henry David Thoreau

Things do not change; we change.

Henry David Thoreau

I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life, and see if I could not learn what it had to teach, and not, when I came to die, discover that I had not lived. I did not wish to live what was not life, living is so dear; nor did I wish to practice resignation, unless it was quite necessary. I wanted to live deep and suck out all the marrow of life, to live so sturdily and Spartan-like as to put to rout all that was not life, to cut a broad swath and shave close, to drive life into a corner, and reduce it to its lowest terms, and, if it proved to be mean, why then to get the whole and genuine meanness of it, and publish its meanness to the world; or if it were sublime, to know it by experience, and be able to give a true account of it in my next excursion.

— *Henry David Thoreau*⁴¹

Hymn: #16 'Tis a Gift to be Simple (two times)

Spoken meditation

James Fisher

Silent Meditation and Musical Response

Joys and Sorrows

Congregational Response: Thus do we weave our lives together.
We mourn. We rejoice. We will remember.

Offering

Erik Walker Wikstrom (*My minister at the Yarmouth UU*)

Before: It is said, “The Lord loves a cheerful giver,” yet we’ll accept from a grinch as well. As the ushers prepare to take this morning’s offering, may each of us look into not just our wallets or our checkbooks to see how much we have with us. Let us look into our hearts, as well, and see what is available there—how much love, how much generosity, how much faith, how much gratitude, how much hope—and let us take our offering from that account.

After: For the gifts which we have received—and the gifts which we, ourselves, are—may we be truly grateful. Yet more than that, may we be committed to using these gifts to make a difference in the world: to increase love and justice; to decrease hatred and oppression; to expand beloved community; to share, and to keep sharing, as long as ever we can. Amen.

Congregational response: For these and all gifts of our community, we are grateful.

Introduction

This is indeed an unusual Sunday. Most of the congregation is on retreat at Ferry Beach, soaking up the brilliant autumn sun and I think living together in covenant. We are here in our usual place, well, not me, but you are here in your usual place and I hope finding time this weekend to enjoy this finest season of the year.

For our visitors, I am a fifteen year member of this Unitarian Universalist Church, which I believe is the eighth UU church to which I have belonged. I am the son of a national leader in the UU Church. I was raised in this tradition, which is to say in a very permissive and democratic environment. After testing a few other religions have found this liberal faith to be my spiritual home.

My work in Hancock County with the Hancock County Planning Commission has included a range of disciplines including transportation, land use, environment, public health, cartography and community development. It has been a good run with a lot of interesting and even tangible results.

I am here today on the cusp of another life change. I have resigned my job, am packing my bags and will be flying south on November 1st with Donna on a one year assignment in northern Colombia with the Peace Corps. I will be working on the Atlantic or Caribbean coast to identify roles that future Peace Corps volunteers can fill to promote rural economic development. Colombia is emerging from a period of economic and political instability driven by the related problems of competing political ideologies and the illegal production and export of narcotics. The FARC and other militarized political groups are taking steps to lay-down, turn in and destroy guns and other weapons of war. This is an ideal time for our country to assist at the grass-roots level, creating new ways for young people to build businesses, create new products and services as alternatives to the dangerous and destructive occupations of guerilla fighters and narcotics traffickers.

In a way, the year ahead brings us full circle to work that Donna and I began in the late 1970s promoting rural development in Ecuador, Bangladesh, and Bolivia. I have learned some lessons in my fifteen years here in this most beautiful corner of Maine and I hope that I can bring some of our Downeast creativity and tenacity to my new mission.

I volunteered today to deliver this sermon hoping that this process would push me to reflect upon the ways in which our Unitarian Universalist traditions will help me to be work effectively in another culture, language and climate. I fear that I have not wholly succeeded, but join me now

in considering a few cases where change here and change abroad must be confronted and how we can draw on our strengths to make this a better world.

As Reverend Mark Worth recently explained in this church, we are a church of covenant, not of creed. Covenant is a pledge, if you like, for how we will treat each other and ourselves. For example, the Madison Wisconsin UU Church

“Expect and accept differences in each person’s truth or point of view. Find space for disagreement and work to find common ground.”

The covenant is not what to believe but rather how to behave or treat oneself and others. People accustomed to creedal religions find our covenants disconcerting. If you are card-carrying Unitarian Universalist, you have probably been asked, “but what do you believe?” “Do you believe that Jesus died on a cross for your sins?” It’s awkward.

For many years the Unitarian Universalist Assembly has debated and adopted “principles” which I think combine the covenantal aspiration of how we shall live with each other and a vision for who we would like the world to be. These are as creedal as we get.

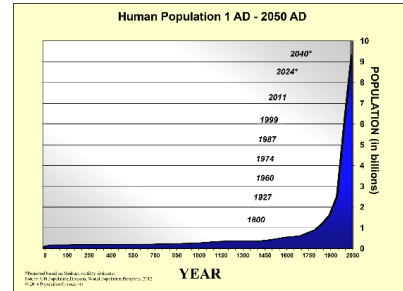
There are seven, but I’ll focus on the Sixth principle, that modestly states, “The goal of world community with peace, liberty and justice for all.” Not so difficult, really. Yes, very difficult.

- [1st Principle](#): The inherent worth and dignity of every person;
- [2nd Principle](#): Justice, equity and compassion in human relations;
- [3rd Principle](#): Acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth in our congregations;
- [4th Principle](#): A free and responsible search for truth and meaning;
- [5th Principle](#): The right of conscience and the use of the democratic process within our congregations and in society at large;
- **[6th Principle](#): The goal of world community with peace, liberty, and justice for all;**
- [7th Principle](#): Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part.

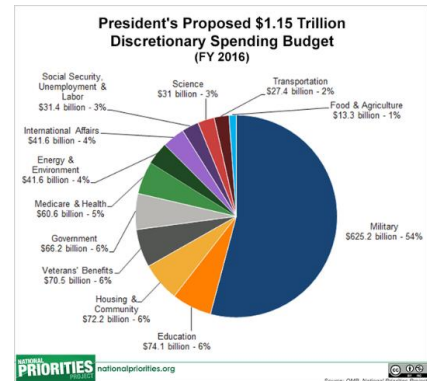
So, the title of my sermon, a misquote of a David Bowie song, is Turn and Face the Change. Let’s turn our attention to change.

Have you heard the news? Have you heard the news?

Population Headline: World Population reaches 7 billion in 2011 and continues to grow by 1 billion in the next 12 years. The world birth rate is roughly double the death rate. (Source: World Population Clock <http://www.worldometers.info/world-population/>) While birth rates are falling worldwide, the large numbers of young people of childbearing age will generate growth for decades into the future, a phenomena called population momentum. Refugees are fleeing draught stricken and war-torn countries of the Middle East and north Africa, heading north to Europe and North America.



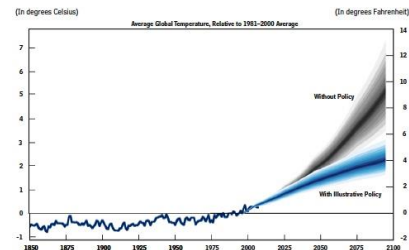
Organization Headline: World military spending continues at approximately 1/2 of world spending on Public Health Care. Military spending in the United States in 2015 is proposed to be 16% of the budget, and 57% of the President’s Discretionary budget. Health occupied 27% of total budget, but only 5% of the discretionary budget.



US Military spending is over 40% of the world’s military spending.

Environment Headline:

Current estimates suggest that at current levels of consumption, the accessible supply of oil will run out in 38 years. Sea levels are projected to rise between 1 to 4 feet by 2100 (85 years) as water becomes more acidic and storm events more pronounced.



Technology Headline:

Good news! Fossil fuel consumption currently equals approximately 1/100 of 1% of the solar energy impacting the planet. The solarize movement is taking root here in Maine as elsewhere, encouraging communities to work together to generate their own sustainable energy.



The boundary between humans and machines continues to narrow.

- Driverless cars

- Cyber Implants
- Genetic Engineering

Reflection:

In all this news there are challenges and there are opportunities.

POET

The son of an “institutional economist”, I was raised to understand that “economics” is not simply the interaction of buyers and sellers in a perfect-information economy, but rather a messier market place that is buffeted by corporate interests, societal goals, imperfect knowledge and ideologies that sometimes appear to disregard the whole in favor of pecuniary interest.

Donna and I returned from the Peace Corps program in Ecuador to pursue graduate education, and I returned to studying institutional economics and the school of Sociological Human Ecology. Never a great scholar, I have remembered a simple acronym that describes four big systems operating in society. The acronym is POET – representing Population, Organization, Environment and Technology. To this day I look to these four systems in my effort to take apart a problem, look for the causal roots, risk factors, vulnerabilities, points of intervention and possible corrections. POET acts like a prism, refracting light to clarify the causes and consequences of change.

Climate Change

I think that most of us in this room are on board with some basic scientific knowledge.

- 1) The planet is very, very old (about 4,600,000,000 years) and humans have occupied the planet for an infinitesimal portion of that time (about 10,000 years).
A great analogy is geological time as a roll of toilet paper with 230 sheets. Each sheet represents 20 million years. Modern man, homo sapiens, have been on this planet for about 10,000 years or .0005 sheets.
- 2) The geological history of the planet has been shaped by the balance of carbon in the land, water and atmosphere. The so called carbon balance has tipped back and forth through processes like photosynthesis that sequesters carbon dioxide into woody plants, and through outgassing of carbon solids back into the atmosphere through volcanoes and now through the tailpipes of our cars and chimneys of our houses and factories. Carbon is neither created nor destroyed, but it is converted.
- 3) Our reliance on fossil fuels over the past few hundred years has resulted in an outgassing process operating at rates hitherto unknown. The conversion of coal, oil and flammable

gasses to heat and carbon dioxide has elevated atmospheric carbon levels creating a greenhouse effect, trapping the immense energy of the sun and causing temperatures to rise, melting glaciers and causing sea levels to rise.

- 4) Elevated levels of carbon, methane and Sulphur in the atmosphere have also contributed to acid rain, ocean acidification, ocean warming and the dramatic changes in marine ecosystems.

Change happens. The world's climate and ecosystems have always changed, but like the roll of toilet paper, the changes occurred over millions or billions of years. Change is happening now at a pace we must measure in years, and in some cases months. The pace of change is so rapid and the consequences so significant that we have seen the pattern of climate change denial shift very quickly. The voices arguing that climate is not changing have been muted. The second line of denial defense that our use of fossil fuels and production other volatile gasses are not causally linked, is rapidly fading. Much of the world is seeing dramatic rising temperatures, droughts and storm events. South Carolina just had a 1,000 year flood event, but 100 year flood events in the north east are occurring every few years.

Climate change is a significant contributing factor to current refugee movements as higher temperatures, droughts, desertification and competition for scarce resources drives masses of humanity to cooler, wetter climates. Who would have imagine the specter of tens of thousands of Syrians chanting "Germany, Germany" even a few months ago? The pace of climate refugee movement is likely to overwhelm any historic migratory flows the world has ever known.

Change happens. How will we react?

- Will we use our science to mitigate climate change through reduction in fossil fuels, re-planting land with trees, encouraging family planning?
- Will we "adapt" to change, building higher levies, helping refugees to find new homes or adapt their homes to climate change, changing our diets as seafood becomes prohibitively expensive?
- Will we deny change is happening, bar the gate, building high walls and fences to keep not only the water but also the refugees away, and use our military might to buffer us from the consequence of our actions?

How will we react?

Guns and Society

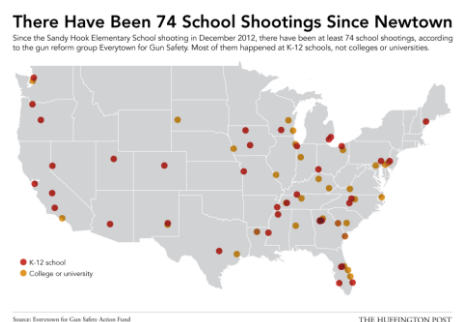
One of our great challenges is knowing when change has occurred. Like a number of you, I reach a birthday, count the number of years I've been at something, blink and ask, what just happened? Where did the time go? Everything has changed, but I'm not sure when it happened.

Big changes may appear as a scattering of small, seemingly isolated events. Over time the pattern becomes apparent, but by then the underlying causes may be entrenched and difficult to reverse.

Governor Jeb Bush recently, and no doubt regrettably, said “Stuff Happens” referring the massacre at Umpqua Community College, one of a string of school massacres. One student, without warning came to school carrying multiple firearms, killed others and eventually himself. His reasons may never be understood, and it is likely that he could not provide a reason for such unreasonable behavior. But, we must challenge ourselves to get beyond a fatalistic and sometimes callous dismissal of tragedy, stuff happens, with a more dynamic acknowledgement that “Change Happens”.

One isolated event may be dismissed as the actions of a mentally ill student. When the pattern is repeated over and over and over, we have to consider that a change has happened in our society and we need to understand and address that change.

We want to understand cause as well as effect. What conditions, writ large, contributed to the Umpqua, Sandy Hook, Columbine, Virginia State University, West Virginia University 2007 and 2014, and on and on. There have 142 such attacks since Sandy Hook in 2012. The pace of campus killings has reached a level that we have begun to accept this much as we have been complacent about the high murder rate in our urban centers.



In criminal analysis we look to motive, opportunity, and criminal record. Criminal record is often absent, in isolation the motive may appear to be mental illness, social ostracism, isolation, bullying. For our purposes we probably need to consider a bigger picture, looking across a larger set of massacres.

The biography, or personal experiences, of each perpetrator and each victim have intersected with the history of our society and created tragic results. We can, and should, understand the individual in a tragedy, their biography. But we must also understand the social and historical context.

We also need to understand that our perspective, the prism we use to refract glaring light into constituent colors, to isolate cause and effect, is not shared by everyone. In social science we attempt to pare away the random noise of the world to isolate the factors that would motivate a young man to stockpile guns, launch an attack on fellow students and faculty and take his own

life. Unfortunately, even with a burgeoning number of cases, the question of motive remains elusive. Rather than one or two causes, we are confronted with a complex narrative of the lives of the killers.

In these school massacres, opportunity, in criminology parlance, appears to be more uniform. In a word, guns. Lots of guns. These centuries' old, simple mechanical devices use the controlled explosion of a minute quantity of gunpowder to direct a bullet to a target. Gun technology has penetrated this country as no other in history. The shooter at Umpqua is reported to have been carrying six guns and to have owned 14 guns in total, all purchased legally. He also wore flack jacket In fact, the guns used in most school massacres were acquired legally by the shooters or their families.

I'm not running for office in the NRA, though as a young teen I was qualified as a sharp-shooter bar-2. I am sickened by the response of the NRA and other gun advocacy groups that feel having more guns in society is the answer to gun violence.

Unitarianism-Universalism draws on many traditions. The most important for me has been our humanist tradition of belief in science and rationality. The data are incontrovertible. More guns result in more gun violence, more killings, more massacres and especially more suicides.

Technology – better, cheaper guns that hold more bullets, are easily concealed
Organization - the laws that we write to enhanced access to guns, encourage carrying concealed weapons, foster an environment of fear and even prevent expenditure of tax dollars on research about gun violence.

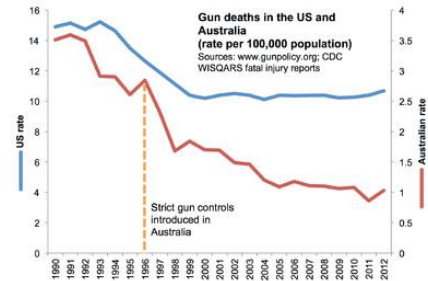
Cheryl Wheeler, responding to early school massacres wrote a powerful, chanting song, If It Were Up to Me. Maybe you have heard it. I'll quote a few lines from the beginning and a few from then.

Maybe it's the movies, maybe it's the books
Maybe it's the bullets, maybe it's the real crooks
Maybe it's the drugs, maybe it's the parents
Maybe it's the colors everybody's wearin
...
Maybe it's the fertilizer, maybe it's the nose rings
Maybe it's the end, but I know one thing.
If it were up to me, I'd take away the guns.
(P) October 1, 1997

Change happens. Our religion speaks to the need to foster “**a world community with peace, liberty, and justice for all;**” We need to enact laws that preserve our freedom from fear, our

freedom to learn in a school environment that is safe, our freedom to live in a community where guns are regulated to promote safety and, in the words of the second amendment, to form a well-regulated militia. Getting there is not going to be easy, and in fact we appear to be moving swiftly in the other direction.

We can turn to examples like Australia, a country with similar culture and traditions to the US. After mass shooting events in 1996 the Australian government enacted gun control laws that still permitted gun ownership, but required registration, education, handling restrictions and enacted a buy-back program particularly for hand-guns. The results were significant. In 1996 gun related deaths were 2.5 per 100,000 population, the US rate was 12 per 100,000, about 5 times higher. In 2012 the Australian rate has declined to 1 death per 100,000 and the use has declined to 11, or 11 times higher, and our rate is increasing, suicide being the most significant contributor.



In Colombia the government and militarized political groups have agreed to de-escalate violence, work for peace and lay down their guns. Just two weeks ago President Juan Manuel Santos and FARC leader Timolion Jimenez announced an accord that will allow FARC to become a legitimate political party, we hope ending 51 years of violent confrontation.

“And He shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.”—[Isaiah 2:3-4](#)



- Change happens. How will we react? May we follow our, [6th Principle](#): **The goal of world community with peace, liberty, and justice for all.** And may we pursue that change in ourselves, our community and our world through simple covenant, an agreement to live together
- “Expect and accept differences in each person’s truth or point of view. Find space for disagreement and work to find common ground.”

May it be so.

Closing Hymn: 38 Morning Has Broken

Closing Words

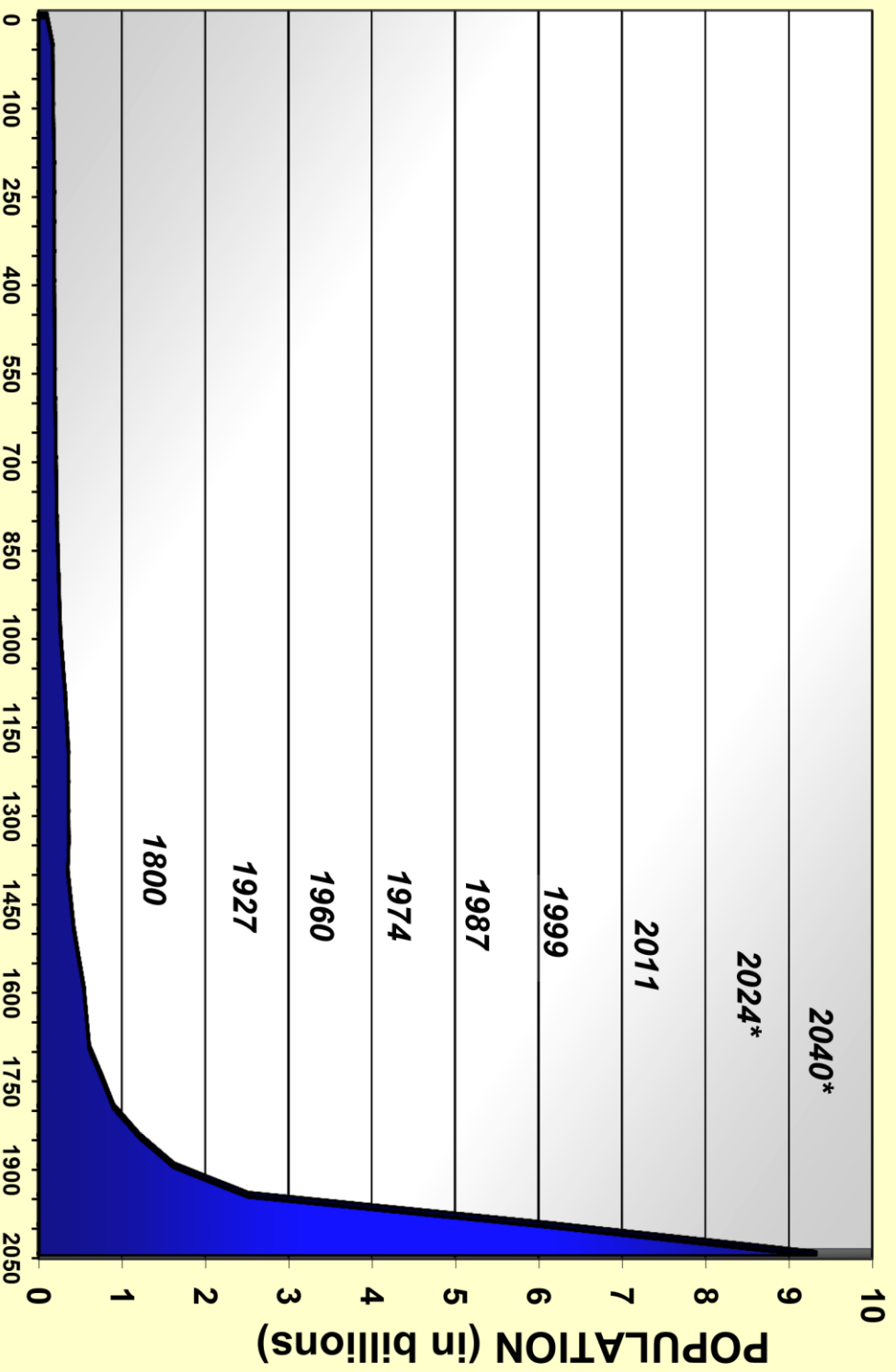
“Finish each day and be done with it. You have done what you could. Some blunders and absurdities no doubt crept in; forget them as soon as you can. Tomorrow is a new day. You shall begin it serenely and with too high a spirit to be encumbered with your old nonsense.”

— [Ralph Waldo Emerson](#)

Postlude:

Rissa Moore

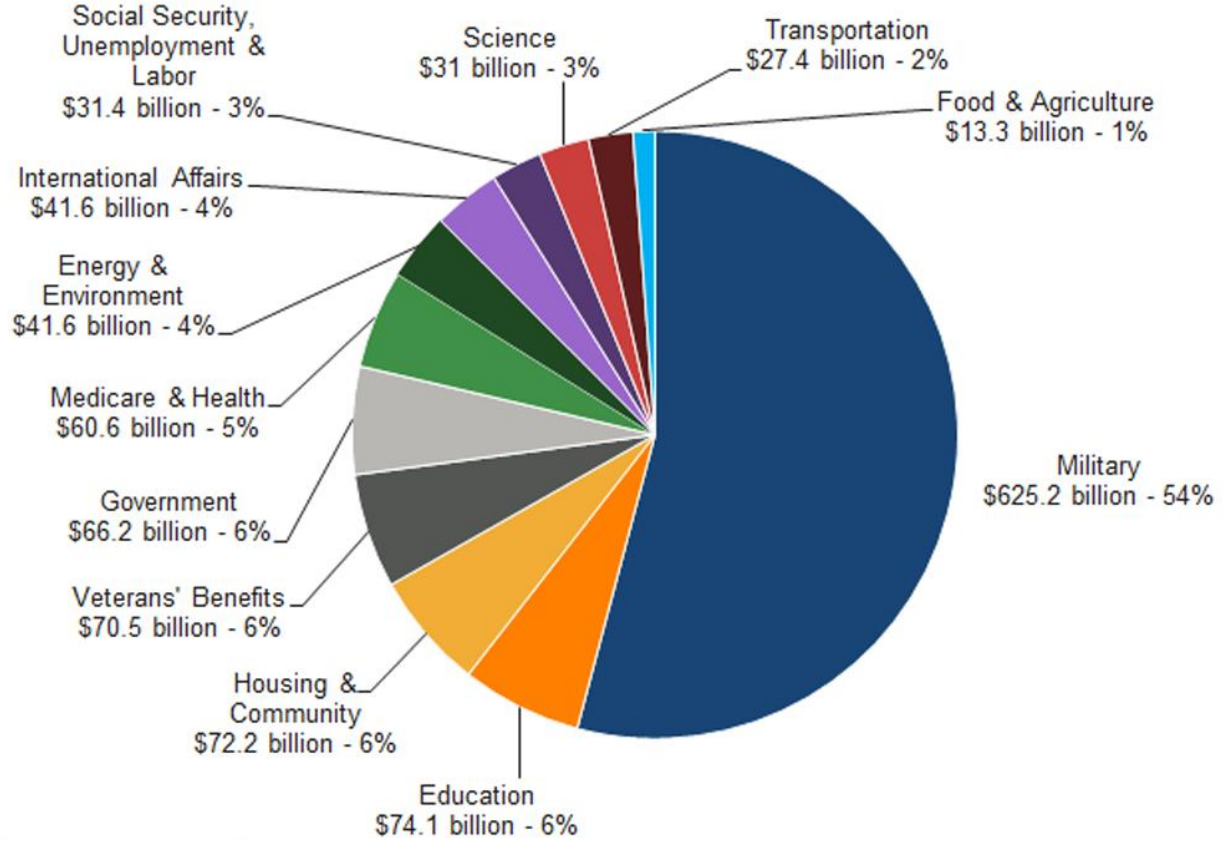
Human Population 1 AD - 2050 AD



*Projected based on Medium Fertility Estimates
Source: UN Population Division, World Population Prospects, 2012
© 2014 Population Connection

YEAR

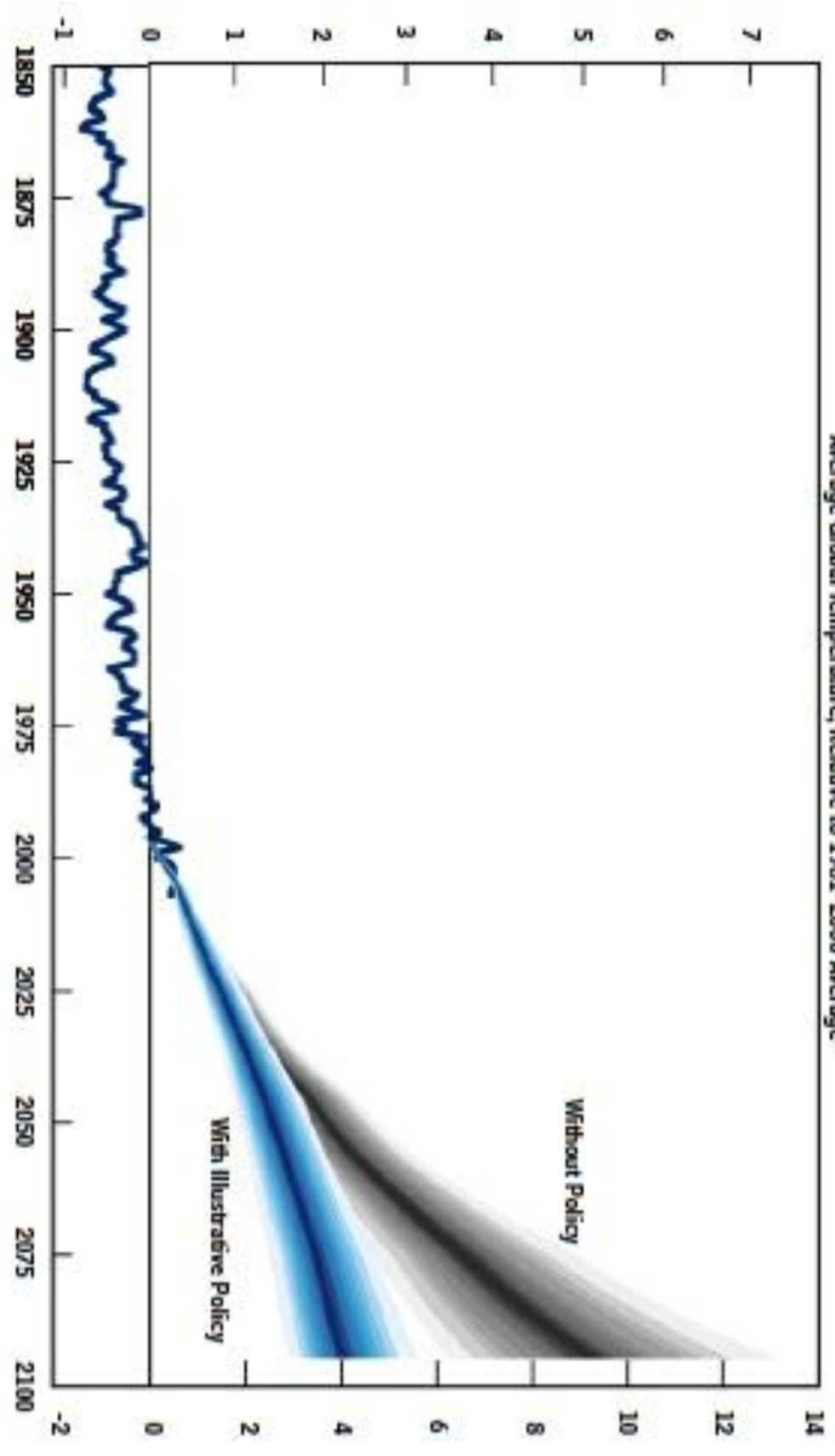
President's Proposed \$1.15 Trillion Discretionary Spending Budget (FY 2016)



(In degrees Celsius)

Average Global Temperature, Relative to 1981-2000 Average

(In degrees Fahrenheit)





Buy solar with your neighbors.
Save money with your neighbors.

The Town of Freeport is bringing the community together to lower the cost of solar. Property owners who purchase a system with our installation partners by September 1, 2015 can benefit from reduced costs through the community's bulk purchasing program.

[Get a Quote!](#)

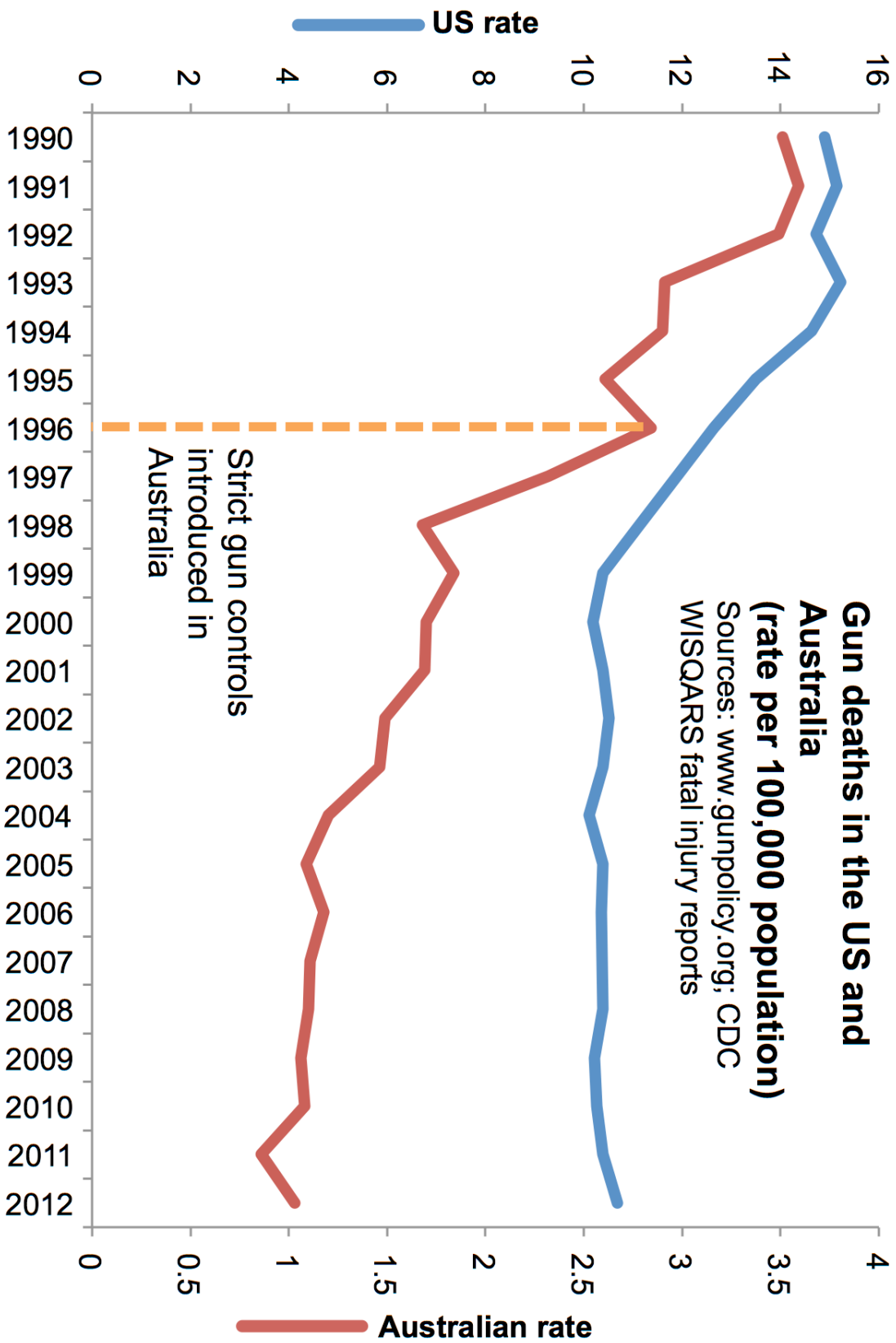
Community participation to-date



40
SYSTEMS



238 kW
CAPACITY





8/211