

# OPINION

Mark Nusbaum, President  
Frank M. Denton, Editor  
Michael P. Clark,  
Editorial Page Editor

Editorial board: Those at left, Bobby Martin,  
editorial writers Roger Brown and Paula Horvath.  
New citizen members will begin in January.

**A VERSE FOR TODAY**  
I desire, therefore, that the men pray everywhere,  
lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting.  
1 Timothy 2:8

## A business approach to sea level rise

The science of climate change has been so poisoned by ideological battles that real threats are being ignored in Northeast Florida.

A study by a task force organized by the Northeast Florida Regional Planning Council has been conducted largely out of sight, focusing on the business impacts of sea level rise in this area.

Skeptics of climate change have been tireless in trying to raise suspicions, reminiscent of the attempts to raise doubts about the scientific evidence that smoking cigarettes causes cancer.

All along, the Times-Union's position on this issue is best expressed as a pragmatic one based on the classic principles of insurance.

It becomes clearer daily that Florida, with its extensive coastline, is on the front lines of climate change, as we said in an editorial in May.

If climate change experts are right — and the vast majority agree — then at least we should prepare and mitigate against potential impacts. To not do so would be as irresponsible as failing to buy flood insurance in a flood-prone zone.

But could all those climate scientists be wrong? Or could all of them — meteorologists included — be part of some sinister plot? Doubtful.

Some of the arguments against climate change confuse climate and weather. Or they largely consist of tiresome jokes about the latest cold snap.

But the worldwide consensus is growing. More and more ordinary people are taking the lead, organizing rallies, signing petitions and engaging in other actions aimed at forcing governments to take seriously their fears of rising sea levels, extreme weather and health effects.

Half a million people rallied worldwide in September

ahead of the United Nations Climate Summit in New York, including an estimated 310,000 in the Big Apple. One month later, marchers in the Philippines launched a 1,000-kilometer walk to bring attention to the threat of climate change to their islands.

Marchers will take to the streets once again in Lima, Peru, this week to urge attendees at the U.N.'s Framework Convention on Climate Change to draft a robust set of procedures to deal with climate change.

Another 2 million people have signed a petition calling on governments and others to take bold action during this week's Lima conference, during which attendees will hammer out the next international treaty on climate change to be voted on in Paris in 2015.

Michael Dorsey, the director of the Sierra Club, said the biggest push for dealing with climate change is coming not from governments but from citizens and citizen organizations.

"The unfolding crisis requires more ambition and much more urgency," Dorsey said.

### LOCAL IMPACT OF CLIMATE CHANGE

While Jacksonville has played a minor part in these citizens' climate activities, the city and surrounding area will not be immune to the impact of climate change, especially sea level rise.

Maps predicting changes due to sea level rise, such as the one available at geology.com, show parts of Jacksonville inundated. Especially at risk are vast land areas along the Intracoastal, the St. Johns River and much of the Beaches.

Other more specifically targeted reports show the susceptibility of nearby areas to climate change.

University of Florida scientists recently released their findings that rising seas are threatening the sustainability of operations at the Kennedy Space Center. In fact, without a line of man-made dunes created to replace eroded ones, the launching pads at Kennedy would already be affected by encroaching saltwater.

Further north up the coast, Cumberland Island and the chain of barrier islands that protect the coast from the

rolling seas have also been declared at risk.

The Regional Community Institute of Northeast Florida, a nonprofit created by the regional planning council, has put forth suggestions on how the area can prepare for sea level rise. Other agencies are also engaged in efforts to deal with a rise in the ocean.

But while attempts are being made to address the results of climate change, namely sea level rise, few attempts have been made to address the source of climate change in an attempt to halt the process. Perhaps that's because some people still question whether humans are at fault despite the fact that nearly all climate scientists agree that climate change is man-made. Now, we must get beyond that.

### WHERE'S THE OUTRAGE?

Gov. Rick Scott met with many of Florida's leading climate scientists who asked for practical solutions.

The scientists gave the governor a series of specific action steps that need to be taken. The governor and the Legislature should take these steps seriously — and start setting priorities.

Implement immediately the steps that are inexpensive or that have other benefits. For instance, mitigation against sea level rise also is likely to help when it comes to hurricanes.

As for those steps that will be expensive, that will require responsible spending plans.

In any case, the state of Florida with all of its coastline and Northeast Florida, which is intersected by waterways, cannot afford to ignore this real threat.

The cost of delaying action will be great.

What would are we leaving our young people? How will we explain the fact that we took no action in the face of overwhelming evidence that the threat is real?

When sea level rise begins to take back coastal property, the skeptics will go quiet.

Future generations will be left to clean up the mess.

Today is Climate Action Day at the U.N. conference in Lima.

Make a commitment now to make your voice heard.