While US policymakers — particularly Republicans and those in coal states — are busy complaining about developing countries not capping their carbon emissions, New Delhi is busy actually doing something about climate change.

Two weeks ago, India instituted a tax on coal, instituting a form of carbon tax that talented advocates (such as the good folks at the Carbon Tax Center) have been pushing for a while, and have been unable to get through Congress. The tax is not huge — one rupee (about $1) per metric ton, but it's a start, and it's way more than the US has done. You can find the new India coal rules here.

Meanwhile, the Government of India also recently decontrolled prices of petroleum and diesel fuel, thus again using a market-based mechanism to handle energy demand. This, of course, is more than environmental policy: it is policy designed to make India's energy use more efficient. And here, to the extent that you support these kinds of policies, the United States is "ahead" of India: Jimmy Carter bravely decontrolled oil prices in 1979, only to suffer the electoral consequences, and be castigated by Republicans for demonstrating insufficient fealty to the Gods of the Market.

Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh is a quiet type, but he has led effectively and courageously on this issue. It helps, of course, that India is a parliamentary system, a far more effective form of democracy than American-style Presidentialism.

This once again goes to demonstrate the argument that many of use have been making for a while: focusing on the big international climate negotiations is really missing the point, and not seeing the real action. But of course it would be nice if the United States actually had some action to report instead of just more Republican obstruction.