

An Urgent Call for Vermont Leadership on Climate Change

A Vision for Climate Stability, Energy Independence, Equity and Affordability

At a time when the federal government has launched an all-out assault on our environment and put polluters in charge, states must take strong action now to slow climate change and protect the health of families and communities, as well as the natural world that sustains us. The world's leading medical societies and hospitals are calling climate change a "global health emergency," joining the world's leading climate scientists from the United Nations' Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change whose October 2018 report said that avoiding the most catastrophic consequences of climate change will require **"rapid, far-reaching and unprecedented changes in all aspects of society."** How? *Cut fossil fuel use by about half in 12 years.*

One U.N. official described it as "a deafening, piercing smoke alarm;" an alarm aimed directly at world leaders. "The time has come for our leaders to show they care about the people whose fate they hold in their hands," said U.N. Secretary General Antonio Guterres.

The time has come here in Vermont too. We've made some progress, but we are far from meeting our statutory climate commitments. In fact, the latest Agency of Natural Resources study shows Vermont's climate pollution rose 10% *in just two years*. **Leadership is required.**

We have the proven technology and business models to chart a very different course. If we take action, we can do our part on climate change and turn it into an economic opportunity; putting Vermonters to work weatherizing homes, deploying advanced wood heat and heat pumps, installing solar, providing more efficient transportation options and more. What we are missing is the political will and public policy framework necessary to meet the challenge.

We must act swiftly. We must protect the most vulnerable from the health impacts of climate change. We must safeguard wildlife, forests, rivers and lakes so that our children can experience the diversity of life in Vermont's hills and fields. We must ensure all Vermonters can participate in clean energy solutions. And we must advance policies, such as carbon pollution pricing, that address this problem comprehensively – across our economy and all Vermonters' lives.

We urge all Vermont policy makers and the Governor to, at a minimum, champion and support the following proposals in the 2019 legislative session:

- Double the funding for energy-saving weatherization for Vermonters with low incomes.
- Create an electric vehicle incentive program, prioritizing low- and middle-income Vermonters, using the \$3.5 million in consumer protection VW settlement dollars as an initial investment.
- Prohibit the expansion of large-scale industrial fossil fuel infrastructure, like pipelines, an expensive, shortsighted investment in a likely soon-to-be stranded asset.
- Expand the deployment of local renewable power, as we work to beneficially electrify more of our heating and transportation needs.
- Review the results of the impartial Joint Fiscal Office's economic analysis on ways to de-carbonize our economy and advance the policy that works best for Vermont to reduce carbon pollution, grow jobs and protect the most vulnerable.

Tackling climate change is the most urgent issue of our time. Addressing it will require a response – beyond rhetoric – that is commensurate to the challenge. Bold action is needed *today*. **We call on our elected officials to commit to these initial steps in 2019 and to stand ready to take even more significant steps in the future.**

SIGNED BY:

Capstone Community Action
Conservation Law Foundation
Vermont Conservation Voters
Vermont Natural Resources Council
Audubon Vermont
Renewable Energy Vermont
Rights & Democracy
Sierra Club – Vermont Chapter
Vermont Businesses for Social Responsibility
Vermont Climate and Health Alliance
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Vermont Low Income Advocacy Council
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