

Alexandria Emergency Climate Mobilization
Resolution to Declare a Climate Emergency and Take Action to Reduce Carbon Emissions

Whereas global warming over the past century of approximately 1°C has triggered devastating changes to the earth, such as accelerating the collapse of the West Antarctic Ice Sheet, the thawing of the Arctic permafrost, an increase in droughts, heatwaves, forest fires, super storms, flash flooding, the migration of insect-borne diseases, the melting of glaciers, coral bleaching, the mass extinction of species, ocean oxygen loss, and sea level rise; and also is contributing to human migration;

Whereas global warming is caused by our emissions of carbon dioxide, methane, and other greenhouse gases into the atmosphere, primarily from burning fossil fuels;

Whereas carbon dioxide concentrations in the atmosphere reached 415 ppm on March 13th of this year, a level last reached roughly 3 million years ago, when global average temperatures and sea level were significantly higher; today's carbon emissions rates are likely unprecedented over the last 50 million years; and any amount of carbon over 350 ppm causes the earth's temperature to rise; whereas the acceleration of carbon into the atmosphere has increased at a faster rate in the last 100 years than prior centuries;

Whereas a considerable amount of the carbon dioxide emitted to date through burning fossil fuels will remain in the atmosphere warming the planet for tens to hundreds of thousands of years, so that the resulting changes in our world's climate and in sea level rise will persist far longer than us and possibly longer than human civilization; (1)

Whereas 18 of the 19 warmest years on record for the planet have occurred since 2000, with extreme highs occurring around the world, including temperatures in the arctic ocean reaching 84°F;

Whereas these crisis-level climate changes will cause an increase in water and food shortages, civil unrest, state failure, civil war, and instability throughout the world with no region or nation being immune to these effects, including the Commonwealth of Virginia and the City of Alexandria;

Whereas there is a consensus among scientists, as described in the recent United Nations' Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change report, that we must reduce carbon dioxide emissions by 45% from 2010 levels by no later than 2030—in just eleven years—and reach net zero around 2050, in order to stabilize a 1.5° C (2.4° F) temperature increase to have a chance at avoiding profound and disastrous impacts on global climate, ecosystems, and human societies;

Whereas meeting these goals will require annual emissions reductions of roughly 4-5% each year, but U.S. emissions increased 3.4% from 2017 to 2018, and Alexandria's greenhouse gas emissions declined by only 1.4% between 2012 and 2015, showing that all levels of government, state and local governments, and most climate organizations, have drastically underestimated the urgency of the climate crisis, failed to accept that we face an unprecedented global emergency, and are relying on failed strategies of gradualism;

Whereas "In the next few months, the White House will complete the rollback of the most significant federal effort to curb greenhouse-gas emissions, initiated during the Obama administration...expand its efforts to impose Mr. Trump's hard-line views on other nations, building on his retreat from the Paris accord and his recent refusal to sign a communiqué to protect the rapidly melting Arctic region unless it was stripped of any references to climate change...(and)his administration will seek to undermine the very science on which climate change policy rests." (2)

Whereas the costs of addressing this climate emergency are far less than the costs of not addressing the climate crisis; and solving the crisis will take significant public investment, commitment and resolve; the US Climate Assessment has also issued dire warnings about the potential for irreversible, catastrophic climate changes if we do not take immediate action;

Whereas we must, together, implement a massive emergency global mobilization effort to rapidly eliminate greenhouse gas emissions, and a plan for the removal of excess carbon from the atmosphere; each of us has a moral duty to safeguard the planet for future generations; and though the City has been an environmental leader by establishing the Eco-City Charter in 2008 and Environmental Action Plan in 2010, we now need to take strong and unprecedented action to lead and enable community-wide greenhouse gas emissions reductions and prepare Alexandria for the effects of climate change;

Whereas the Alexandria Democratic Committee previously passed a Resolution in March, 2018 supporting the City and community to work toward securing 100% renewable energy by 2030. Therefore be it resolved that the Alexandria Democratic Committee calls upon the Alexandria City Council, the Federal Government, Congress, the Commonwealth of Virginia and other local governments to join Alexandria to declare a climate emergency, and to use sufficient powers and resources to achieve the reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by the city and the entire Alexandria community by 45% no later than 2030, and to achieve net zero carbon emissions by 2050; initiate a massive mobilization to restore a safe climate and build a sustainable economy; and to convey the urgency to its citizens by joining 558 other Councils across the globe (including Montgomery County, MD) representing over 65 million citizens in declaring a Climate Emergency. (3)

Be it further resolved that the Alexandria Democratic Committee calls upon the City Manager, Alexandria City Public Schools and the Alexandria Environmental Policy Commission to advise the Council, no later than the beginning of 202, on specific methods and their return on

investment (best estimate of costs vs. carbon emission reductions) for accelerating the above carbon emission goals.

- (1) <https://www.yaleclimateconnections.org/2010/12/common-climate-misconceptions-atmospheric-carbon-dioxide/>
- (2) https://www.washingtonpost.com/weather/2019/05/14/it-was-degrees-near-arctic-ocean-this-wee-kend-carbon-dioxide-hit-its-highest-level-human-history/?utm_term=.51185a42bb76
- (3) <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/05/27/us/politics/trump-climate-science.html>
- (4) https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/md-politics/hans-riemer-elected-president-of-montgomery-county-council/2017/12/05/22ddeefe-d9c7-11e7-b1a8-62589434a581_story.html?utm_term=.5ca18f76b703

Sustainable DC established the District's commitment to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 50% below 2006 levels by 2032. In December 2017, Mayor Bowser pledged to make the District carbon neutral and climate resilient by 2050.
<https://doee.dc.gov/service/climate-change>

Arlington's Community Energy Plan aims to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 75% by 2050.
<https://newsroom.arlingtonva.us/release/arlington-county-reaffirms-commitment-to-climate-action/>