



Legislation Text

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RESOLUTION OF THE NEW HAVEN BOARD OF ALDERS ENDORSING THE DECLARATION OF A CLIMATE EMERGENCY TO RESTORE A SAFE CLIMATE.

WHEREAS, human activities have warmed the Earth enough to end the 12,000-year period of climate stability that allowed agriculture and human civilization to develop; and

WHEREAS, global warming has already set in motion disastrous changes to the Earth system, including accelerating ice mass loss from the Greenland and West Antarctic Ice Sheets and the thawing of the borders of the vast Arctic permafrost, which holds twice as much stored carbon as the entire atmosphere; and

WHEREAS, the world is on course for 2C of warming at which point many scientists believe that this temperature will initiate a chain of self-reinforcing changes (feedback loops) that dramatically accelerate warming (ex: hotter temperatures cause more forest fires, releasing more CO₂, causing more warming, causing more fires, etc.); and

WHEREAS, 73% of Connecticut residents think global warming will harm future generations; and over 80% of Americans think that CO₂ should be regulated as a pollutant; and

WHEREAS, NASA scientists have concluded that the complete collapse of the Greenland Ice Sheet alone could raise sea levels 23 feet, creating several billion climate refugees and a “global-scale catastrophe”; and

WHEREAS, Connecticut's biggest climate change risks are intimately linked to its 217 miles of Long Island Sound shoreline, where 40 percent of the population lives in 36 coastal communities that now faces the potentially dangerous combination of rising water levels and more frequent and intense storms; and

WHEREAS, over 19,000 scientists have signed a Second Warning to Humanity proclaiming that “a great change in our stewardship of the Earth and the life on it is required, if vast human misery is to be avoided”, and

WHEREAS, the economy's overshoot of a number of ecological limits and, increasingly, climate change, are driving the sixth mass extinction (1000 to 10,000 times above the normal rate) of species, which could devastate much of life on earth for the next 10 million years; and

WHEREAS, England's chief scientific advisor warned that humanity faces a “perfect storm of global events” by 2030 as climate change, population growth, and growing demand for food, energy, and fresh water incite violent conflict over diminishing resources that are essential to human life and dignity; and

WHEREAS, climate-fueled droughts, famines, and diseases have already killed millions of people in the Global South, and displaced millions more; and

WHEREAS, indigenous and low-income communities and communities of color in the United States and abroad have suffered the gravest consequences of the extractive economy since its inception; and

WHEREAS, the destruction caused last year by Hurricanes Harvey and Maria, as well as the record wildfires that devastated Northern California, confirm that the earth is already too hot for safety or justice; and

WHEREAS, it is an act of unspeakable injustice and cruelty to knowingly subject our fellow humans now and

into the future to societal disintegration, food and clean water shortages, economic collapse, and early death on an increasingly uninhabitable planet; and

WHEREAS, Pope Francis has declared that humanity is on the verge of a “global suicide,” and that we will destroy ourselves if we destroy God’s creation; and

WHEREAS, common sense and morality dictate that humanity can no longer safely emit greenhouse gases and must seek to restore a safe level of greenhouse gas concentrations and global average temperatures well below today’s levels; and

WHEREAS, restoring a safe and stable climate requires an emergency mobilization to a near-zero greenhouse gas emissions economy across all sectors at wartime speed, a global effort to rapidly and safely remove all the excess carbon from the atmosphere, and safe measures to protect all people and species from the consequences of abrupt warming in the near-term; and

WHEREAS, reversing ecological overshoot and halting the sixth mass extinction requires an effort to preserve and restore half the Earth’s biodiversity in interconnected wildlife corridors and to humanely stabilize population as well as a shift toward a society that prioritizes conservation, community and mutual aid over consumerism and narcissism; and

WHEREAS, justice requires that those countries, classes and sectors that have contributed the most to this global climate and ecological cataclysm foot a commensurate financial burden in reversing it and protecting those most impacted from the lethal impacts underway already; and

WHEREAS, New Haven cannot wait for more Superstorm Sandy’s, extreme rain and snow events, and accelerating sea level rise to begin an emergency climate mobilization; and

WHEREAS, in present day, New Haven can rise to the challenge of the greatest crisis in history by organizing politically to catalyze a national and global climate emergency effort, employing local workers in a mobilization effort building and installing renewable energy infrastructure, growing local healthy food, restoring ecosystems, and retrofitting and redesigning our built environment, electric grid and transportation systems.

NOW BE IT, THEREFORE, RESOLVED that the City of New Haven declares an existential climate emergency that threatens our city, region, state, nation, civilization, the natural world, and humanity.

1. BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the New Haven Board of Alders will work with the Mayor to establish a Climate Emergency Mobilization Task Force no later than 120 days after the effective date of this order.

2. BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Climate Emergency Mobilization Task Force will be charged with leading an emergency mobilization effort that, with appropriate financial and regulatory assistance from state and federal authorities, will aim to end community-wide greenhouse gas emissions by or before December 31, 2030, and to initiate an effort to safely draw down carbon from the atmosphere.

3. BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Mayor directs all City Departments and proprietaries to report to the Climate Emergency Mobilization Task Force no later than 6 months after the effective date of this order on maximum emergency reductions in greenhouse gas emissions from their operations feasible by the end of 2021, with the highest priority placed on an equitable and just transition in all sectors.

4. BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Climate Emergency Mobilization Task Force commits to educating New Haven residents about the climate emergency and the broader ecological crisis and to helping to catalyze a climate emergency mobilization at the local, state, national, and global levels to protect local residents as well as all the people and species of the world.

5. BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Climate Emergency Mobilization Task Force commits to work with local organizations and communities to include job creation, environmental justice, and public health in project development and to prioritize equitable outcomes, particularly for poor and marginalized communities.