



Legislation Text

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Res. No. 864-A

Resolution declaring a climate emergency and calling for an immediate emergency mobilization to restore a safe climate.

By Council Members Kallos, Constantinides, Lander, Reynoso, Levin, Espinal, Koslowitz, Powers, Chin, Rosenthal, Barron and Rivera

Whereas, On April 22, 2016, world leaders from 174 countries and the European Union recognized the threat of climate change and the urgent need to combat it by signing the Paris Agreement, agreeing to keep global warming well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels and to pursue efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5°C; and

Whereas, On October 8, 2018, the United Nations International Panel on Climate Change (“IPCC”) released a special report, which projected that limiting warming to the 1.5°C target this century will require an unprecedented transformation of every sector of the global economy over the next 12 years; and

Whereas, On November 23, 2018, the United States Fourth National Climate Assessment (“NCA4”) was released and details the massive threat that climate change poses to the American economy, our environment and climate stability, and underscores the need for immediate action to address a climate emergency at all levels of government; and

Whereas, According to the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA)’s Goddard Institute for Space Studies (GISS), global temperatures in 2018 were .83°C (1.5°F) warmer than the 1951 to 1980 mean, and the past five years are collectively the warmest in modern history; and

Whereas, The increased and intensifying wildfires, floods, rising seas, diseases, droughts and extreme weather brought on by global warming demonstrates that the Earth is too hot to be a safe environment; and

Whereas, World Wildlife Fund’s 2018 Living Planet report finds that there has been a 60% decline in global wildlife populations between 1970 and 2014, with causes including overfishing, pollution and climate change;

Whereas, According to the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services, human activity has already severely altered 40% of the marine environment, 50% of inland waterways, and 75% of the planet’s land, and it is projected that half-to-one million species are threatened with extinction, many within the next few decades; and

Whereas, The United States of America has disproportionately contributed to the climate emergency and has repeatedly obstructed global efforts to transition toward a green economy, and thus bears an extraordinary responsibility to rapidly address these existential threats; and

Whereas, Restoring a safe and stable climate requires accelerated actions to reach net zero greenhouse gas emissions across all sectors to end the 6th mass extinction of species, and to protect all people and species from the increasingly severe consequences of climate change; and

Whereas, A sweeping transition to clean energy systems that centers on equity and justice in their solutions is vital to our future and must include the following goals: dramatically expand existing renewable power sources and deploy new production capacity with the goal of meeting 100% of national power demand through renewable sources; build a national, energy-efficient, “smart” grid; upgrade every residential and industrial building for state-of-the-art energy efficiency, comfort and safety; eliminate greenhouse gas emissions from manufacturing, agricultural and other industries, including by investing in local-scale agriculture in communities across the country; repair and improve transportation and other infrastructure, and upgrade water infrastructure to ensure universal access to clean water; fund massive investment in the decrease of greenhouse gases; make “green” technology, industry, expertise, products and services a major export of the United States, with the aim of becoming the international leader in helping other countries become greenhouse gas neutral economies and bringing about a global transition from fossil fuels; and

Whereas, Marginalized populations in New York City and worldwide, including people of color, immigrants, indigenous communities, low-income individuals, people with disabilities, and the unhoused are already disproportionately affected by climate change, and will continue to bear an excess burden as temperatures increase, oceans rise, and disasters worsen; and

Whereas, Addressing climate change fairly requires transitioning from fossil fuels to clean, renewable energy that is ecologically sustainable and equitable for all people, especially those most impacted by climate change already and those who will be most impacted in the future; and

Whereas, People around the world have a fundamental human right to clean, healthy and adequate air, water, land, food, education, healthcare, and shelter; and

Whereas, The economy must shift from dirty energy that benefits fossil fuel companies to energy democracy that benefits our people, environment and a clean, renewable energy economy, from funding new highways to expanding public transit, from incinerators and landfills to zero waste products, from industrial food systems to food sovereignty, from car-dependent sprawl and destructive unbridled growth to smart urban development without displacement, and from destructive over-development to habitat and ecosystem restoration; and

Whereas, Building a society that is resilient to the current, expected, and potential effects of climate change will protect health, lives, ecosystems, and economies, and such resilience efforts will have the greatest positive impact if the most dramatic potential consequences of climate change are taken into account; and

Whereas, Climate justice calls for climate resilience planning that addresses the specific experiences, vulnerabilities, and needs of marginalized communities within New York City, who must be included and supported in actively engaging in climate resilience planning, policy, and actions; and

Whereas, Actions to eliminate greenhouse gas emissions and/or decrease greenhouse gases may be taken in ways that also improve resilience to the effects of climate change, and vice versa; and

Whereas, Climate justice requires that frontline communities that have historically borne the brunt of

the extractive fossil-fuel economy, participate actively in the planning and implementation of this mobilization effort to address climate change at all levels of government and that they benefit first from the transition to a renewable energy economy; and

Whereas, Nearly 400 cities, districts and counties across the world representing over 34 million people collectively have recently declared or officially acknowledged the existence of a global climate emergency, including Hoboken, San Francisco, Berkeley, Los Angeles, Montgomery County, Oakland, Richmond, and Santa Cruz in the United States, Bristol and London in the United Kingdom and many cities in Australia, Canada, and Switzerland; and

Whereas, New York City, as the largest city in the United States, can act as a global leader by both converting to an ecologically, socially, and economically regenerative economy at emergency speed, and by organizing a transition to renewable energy and climate emergency mobilization effort; now, therefore, be it

Resolved, The City Council declares a climate emergency and calls for an immediate emergency mobilization to restore a safe climate.

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