

Carbon Neutral Counties Declaration

WHEREAS the world's leading climate scientists agree that the earth is warming at an unprecedented rate and that human emissions of greenhouse gases are the leading cause of climate change;

WHEREAS impacts associated with climate change include, but are not limited to, sea level rise, ocean acidification, more frequent extreme weather events (e.g. floods, heat waves), ecosystem disturbances, shifts in abundance and distribution of plant and animal species, and changes to the quantity and quality of regional water supplies;

WHEREAS scientists have projected that, in order to avoid severe, widespread and irreversible impacts of climate change, such as global and regional food insecurity, global warming must be limited to 2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels;

WHEREAS, under the Paris Climate Agreement, a majority of the world's countries have agreed to plan and regularly report on climate change mitigation efforts, with a goal to limit the increase in global average temperatures below 2 degrees Celsius with efforts to further limit the increase to 1.5 degrees Celsius;

WHEREAS 29 countries, as part of the Carbon Neutrality Coalition, have pledged to meet the goals of the Paris Climate Agreement by achieving carbon neutrality by the second half of the century;

WHEREAS the United States is responsible for producing approximately 15% of the world's greenhouse gas emissions;

WHEREAS many leading U.S. companies are pledging to meet climate mitigation targets by the second half of the century, with several companies committing to carbon neutrality;

WHEREAS state and local governments in the U.S. have been setting new or strengthening existing climate mitigation commitments in recent years, with several U.S. cities pledging to achieve carbon neutrality by 2050 through the Carbon Neutral Cities Alliance;

WHEREAS state and local governments with climate mitigation commitments have developed sector-specific goals, targeting greenhouse emissions from the building and energy, transportation, and solid waste sectors;

WHEREAS counties have a unique role to play in climate mitigation efforts through their influence over the development and implementation of local and regional policies geared toward county government operations and energy use, air quality, land use planning, transportation, zoning, forest preservation, water conservation, and wastewater and solid waste management;

WHEREAS counties have made significant progress toward existing climate commitments, such as the 2007 Cool Counties Climate Stabilization Declaration, in which counties pledged to develop local greenhouse gas inventories, work with local, state and federal governments to

reduce county geographical greenhouse gas emissions by 80% below 2005 levels by 2050, and urge federal actors to enact measures to meet this emission reduction goal, including more stringent fuel economy standards;

WHEREAS the implementation of more aggressive climate mitigation commitments at the county level, with goals geared toward high-emitting sectors, such as buildings and energy, transportation, and solid waste, would align counties with other local governments and those in the private sector leading on climate mitigation;

WHEREAS climate mitigation efforts provide numerous social, economic and environmental benefits for both local and regional communities;

NOW THEREFORE WE DECLARE,

We as Carbon Neutral Counties will take immediate steps to mitigate our county government's contribution to climate change by making the following commitments:

- i. Commit to being energy carbon neutral by 2040 while significantly reducing operational greenhouse gas emissions. Generate renewable energy in-county, increase energy performance standards in existing buildings, and ensure all new buildings and major renovations meet Net Zero Energy standards.
- ii. Transition municipal bus fleets to electric (or other non-carbon emitting alternatives) by 2030, school bus fleets by 2035 and non-bus fleets by 2035. For non-bus fleet vehicles that may not have non-carbon emitting alternatives, develop a plan to mitigate vehicle emissions. To further reduce emissions from the transportation sector, work with local, state and federal governments to develop a safe, continuous and interconnected transit system, improve options for safe biking and walking, and encourage alternative transit options for students, workers and residents.
- iii. Be zero waste by 2030. Develop sustainable purchasing programs and encourage composting among county government workers and students.
- iv. Develop these goals in tandem with workforce development objectives, to increase learning resources and green career opportunities for students and working professionals. Develop standardized green career toolkits and programs to encourage participation in the energy or environmental sector.
- v. Urge Congress and the Administration to provide incentives, requirements or other such measures to meet carbon neutrality goals, with specific measures targeting the building and energy, transportation and solid waste sectors.
- vi. Ensure these goals are implemented equitably, and in a manner that protects and improves the quality of life for community members, regardless of age, race, color, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, national origin, marital status, disability,

socio-economic status, neighborhood of residence or other characteristics. Ensure all community members can fully participate in and contribute to the environmental, social and economic benefits and/or opportunities that may result from the implementation of these goals, and that no communities are disproportionately impacted by the transition to a carbon neutral economy.