

## **An Urgent Call for Vermont Leadership on Climate Change**

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

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At a time when the federal government has launched an 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." And the world's leading climate scientists from the UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change in their 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.*

While Vermont has made some progress, we are far from meeting our statutory climate action commitments. In fact, the latest Agency of Natural Resources study shows Vermont's climate pollution rose 10% *in just two years.* **Leadership to reverse this trend is urgently required.**

We can and must take serious steps towards reducing emissions. If we take meaningful action, we can do our part on climate change and create more energy independence, enhance public health, improve the lives of low-income Vermonters, protect wildlife, and sustain our forests, which play a critical role in helping to slow climate change by taking carbon out of the atmosphere. We can also generate tremendous economic opportunity – putting Vermonters to work weatherizing homes, deploying advanced wood heat and heat pumps, installing solar, providing more efficient transportation options and much 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 rich diversity of life in Vermont's hills and fields. We must ensure all Vermonters, regardless of income, 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, Governor Phil Scott and all Vermonters to champion and support the following proposals, at a minimum, in the 2019 legislative session:**

- Double the number of low- and moderate-income homes weatherized every year.
- Create an electric vehicle incentive program, prioritizing low- and middle-income Vermonters, using the \$3.6 million in consumer protection VW settlement dollars as an initial investment and direct the remaining federal VW settlement dollars (Appendix D) to vehicle electrification.
- Prohibit the expansion of new 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 cut carbon pollution across our economy and advance the policy that works best for Vermont to reduce emissions, grow jobs and protect the most vulnerable.
- Join other New England states in enacting a Global Warming Solutions Act to require progress on our climate commitments.

Tackling climate change is the most urgent issue of our time. Addressing it will require a response 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 stand ready to take even bolder steps in the future.**

SIGNED BY:

- Capstone Community Action
- Cathedral Square Corporation
- Champlain Valley Office of Economic Opportunity
- Conservation Law Foundation
- Downstreet Housing & Community Development
- Vermont Conservation Voters
- Vermont Natural Resources Council
- Audubon Vermont
- Renewable Energy Vermont
- Rights & Democracy
- Sierra Club – Vermont Chapter
- Vermont Affordable Housing Coalition
- Vermont Businesses for Social Responsibility
- Vermont Climate and Health Alliance
- Vermont Interfaith Power and Light
- Vermont Low Income Advocacy Council
- Vermont Public Interest Research Group
- The Nature Conservancy
- Vermont Youth Lobby
- 350Vermont
- NeighborWorks of Western Vermont

