

Dear Labor Climate Activist:

This is an invitation to help create a powerful voice within organized labor to advocate for good jobs through a just transition to a climate-safe, worker-friendly economy.

As we enter the Trump era we must build a strong national movement that can resist the attacks on labor, communities, and environment. The Labor Network for Sustainability's Labor Convergence on Climate is doing just that. We are:

Promoting a public dialogue and debate within labor and climate movements.

Developing a comprehensive policy agenda for a Just Transition.

Providing a national vehicle and strategy for unions and union activists to take action on climate change.



The Convergence is asking union members and labor organizers to take these initiatives:

1. Join the Labor Network for Sustainability (membership application attached). To join you will be asked to sign on to our Mission and Principles (see below) and pay dues. Dues are \$60/yr (\$5/month) or whatever you can afford. If you can pay more that would be great. We would like to build LNS to be a politically independent organization, and your financial support will help to make that happen. You must be a union member, a member of a worker center, a worker engaged in a labor campaign or a staff member for any of the above.
2. Form a Labor Climate Action Committee in your union or community.
3. Pass a resolution in your union endorsing labor climate initiatives. (see attached Template resolution)
4. Participate in the April 29 People's Climate Mobilization in Washington, D.C. or in your home area.

Template Resolution

[Note: This template resolution simply provides an endorsement for the Labor Network for Sustainability mission statement and principles and for upcoming labor-climate actions. “Whereas” clauses and additional points can easily be added. For examples of broader union climate resolutions, see the Convergence “Climate Change Resolutions” webpage at <http://www.labor4sustainability.org/union-resolutions/>



Template Resolution:

We hereby endorse the Mission Statement and the Statement of Principles of the Labor Network for Sustainability’s Labor Convergence on Climate.

We hereby endorse the April 29, 2017 People’s Climate Mobilization and will encourage our members to participate at home and in Washington, D.C.

We will forward this resolution to the officers of our national union and to the national AFL-CIO with a request that they support a strong climate protection resolution at the upcoming AFL-CIO convention.

Organizing a Labor Climate Action Committee

Think about organizing a Labor Climate Action Committee the same way you would about any organizing campaign:



Preliminary Decisions:

- Organize in your own local or with other locals in your union or community?
- Form a committee of individual union members and leaders or be an official organ of the union?

Start where you are:

- Approach those you think may already be concerned.
- Invite others to participate in informal and formal discussions.
- Talk with officials of your union and ask them to cooperate with the process.
- Ask your union to establish a committee, forum, or other process for taking a public position on jobs and climate justice.

Start With Small Actions:

- Organize educational programs like a film or speaker series.
- Pass a resolution.
- Hold a meeting on labor and climate with other unions and climate groups.
- Endorse and participate in a march, rally, or other public action.

Envision further steps:

- Include climate concerns in contract negotiations?
- Use union clout in the political process?
- Support local projects for clean, climate-safe energy?
- Divest union funds from fossil fuels and invest in local climate-safe economic development?

Factsheet #1: Climate change is here



What is climate change?

- Rays of light from the sun warm the Earth.
- If just the right amount of that heat goes back out into space, the Earth's average temperature stays the same.
- If too much heat is trapped by carbon and other gases in the atmosphere, the average temperature of the Earth will rise.
- This is called the "greenhouse effect." It is like a blanket warming the Earth.
- 97% of climate scientists say that the greenhouse effect is now causing the temperature of the Earth to rise.
- According to NASA, "ninety-seven percent of climate scientists agree that climate-warming trends over the past century are very likely due to human activities."¹

How much global warming?

- Earth has already warmed roughly 2 degrees Fahrenheit.
- Carbon already in the air will raise it another 1.5 degrees Fahrenheit.
- Unless we reverse current trends there will be a 4-9 degree Fahrenheit increase by the end of century.
- Unpredictable "tipping points" may make it far worse.

¹ <http://climate.nasa.gov/scientific-consensus>

Factsheet #2: What are the consequences of global warming?

The effects of global warming can seem contradictory:

- Snowstorms as well as heat waves
- Downpours as well as droughts
- The reason?: Global warming destabilizes and disrupts the earth's entire climate system, leading to opposite extremes.

Results already:

- o Heat waves
- o droughts
- o wildfires
- o crop failures
- o floods
- o hurricanes
- o tornadoes
- o food shortages and price spikes
- o water wars
- o extinction of species

Effects on workers

- o Workplace closings from extreme weather events and coastal flooding
- o Reduction in tourism and outdoor recreation
- o Higher taxes for cleanup, repair, and adaptation
- o Government funds diverted to cleanup, repair, and adaptation
- o “As the costs for doing business increase, competitiveness of individual firms, entire sectors or regions may decline. With this decline may come a loss of employment and overall economic security.”²



² CIER, “The US Economic Impacts of Climate Change and the Costs of Inaction,” October, 2007. <http://www.cier.umd.edu/climateadaptation/index.html>

Factsheet #3: How can we protect the climate?



- If we sharply cut the carbon and other greenhouse gases we put in the atmosphere, climate change will slow down.
- We need to reduce carbon and other greenhouse gases to a safe level.
- Scientists think a safe level is below 350 parts per million (ppm).
- The current level is already over 400.
- To reach 350 by the end of the century will require reducing fossil fuel emissions by six percent a year.
- That can be done by changing electricity, transportation, and buildings:
 - Make electricity with solar and wind power instead of fossil fuels.
 - Use electricity more efficiently through new transmission lines, storage, and conservation.
 - Use more renewable energy, public transportation, and rail transport.
 - Make buildings more efficient through insulation, weatherization, cogeneration, and solar and geothermal heating, cooling, and hot water.
 - Reduce the bloated Pentagon budget and its 800-1,000 overseas bases. The US military contributes 5 percent of current global warming emissions -- more than most countries.³

³ “War and Global Warming: Can we Save the Planet Without Taking on the Pentagon,” *Portside*, H. Patricia Hynes January 16, 2017.

Factsheet #4: Who is afraid of climate protection? ⁴

- Proven coal, oil, and gas reserves, if burned, will produce five times as much carbon as we can safely put in the atmosphere between now and 2050.
- Those reserves are owned by fossil fuel companies like Exxon and Peabody and countries like Venezuela and Kuwait.
- Those reserves are worth about \$27 trillion.
- A transition to a low-carbon economy will make those assets worth far less.
- Fossil fuel companies don't want the value of their assets to fall.
- So they try to prevent a transition to a climate safe economy by:
 - Subsidizing corrupt scientists who claim global warming isn't real.
 - Paying for think tanks and propagandists to deny climate change.
 - Claiming climate protection will kill jobs and lead to economic catastrophe.
 - Promoting unworkable solutions like "clean coal."
 - Hiring thousands of lobbyists to birddog politicians.
 - Paying millions to elect their political candidates to office.



⁴ Data in this fact sheet is from Bill McKibben, "Global Warming's Terrifying New Math," *Rolling Stone*, July 19, 2012.

Factsheet #5: Protecting workers and communities with worker-friendly climate policies⁵



It is unfair for workers, who happen to work in jobs that need to be eliminated in order to achieve some social good, to bear the burden of that change by being left on their own without a job.

Just transition policies mean workers will not just be thrown on the trash heap.

People who lose their jobs because of transition to a climate-safe economy should be eligible for:

- full wages and benefits for at least 3 years
- up to 4 years of education or training, including tuition and living expenses
- decent pensions with healthcare for those ready to retire.

Communities that lose employers should be eligible for transition assistance:

- When the Department of Energy eliminated nearly 50,000 jobs by downsizing 13 major nuclear weapons facilities, it conducted a Worker and Community Transition program that provided grants and other assistance for communities affected by the shutdown of nuclear facilities. The goal was to assist displaced workers and provide economic recovery and diversification assistance to the affected communities. A nuclear test site in Nevada, for example, was repurposed to demonstrate concentrated solar power technologies.
- In the face of Trump’s dubious promises to restore coal mining, a group of senators introduced the RECLAIM Act to provide \$1 billion to create new jobs and economic opportunities in communities impacted by the decline of the coal industry through the reclamation of abandoned coal mines.
- The “Clean Energy Worker Just Transition Act” proposed by Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.), Jeff Merkley (D-Ore.), Edward Markey (D-Mass.) initially targets coal workers, but over time expands to other energy sector workers as well. It provides unemployment insurance, health care, and pensions for up to three years and job training and living expenses up to four years. Employers receive tax incentives to hire transitioning employees. Counties where 35 or more workers become eligible for the program can receive targeted development funds. The right of workers to join unions is protected by streamlining NLRB union recognition provisions.

⁵ Jeremy Brecher, “A Superfund for Workers,” *Dollars & Sense* (Nov/Dec 2015)

Factsheet #6: Why does climate change matter to workers and our unions?



American workers are already experiencing the effects of climate change:

- Workplace closings from extreme weather events and coastal flooding.
 - Reduction in tourism and outdoor recreation.
 - Higher taxes for cleanup, repair, and adaptation.
 - Gutting of public budgets from costs of cleanup, repair, and adaptation
- Climate change will affect jobs.

According to one study, “As the costs for doing business increase, competitiveness of individual firms, entire sectors or regions may decline. With this decline may come a loss of employment and overall economic security.”⁶

Why should workers and their unions be concerned about climate change?

- Climate change threatens workplaces and is already causing economic devastation and job loss - climate change is the real job killer.
- If labor does not put itself in a central place at the table where climate change policies are being formed, the policies will undoubtedly be anti-labor.
- Only labor has the direct interest and the power to ensure that the transition to a sustainable economy is fair to working people.
- Workers share with all people the universal interest in protecting our planet.
- Climate protection will create more and better jobs for many workers and unions.
- Being a leader for climate protection is essential for the labor movement to maintain its leadership role in society and its alliances with other social groups.
- The cost of climate protection will increase exponentially the longer we wait.

⁶ CIER, “The US Economic Impacts of Climate Change and the Costs of Inaction,” October, 2007. <http://www.cier.umd.edu/climateadaptation/index.html>

Factsheet #7: What unions can do about climate change

Labor matters in the fight against climate change. Even in its weakened condition, it retains enough political clout to help or hinder the passage of meaningful climate change legislation. And unions can act on their own to reduce the carbon emissions in their workplaces and communities.



Many unions have passed resolutions on climate change; the goal for activists inside and outside of organized labor is now to encourage them to act. Here are some actions unions can take – and that various unions are already taking:

- Articulate a vision of organized labor as a leader in a broad climate protection movement promoting a just transition to a climate-safe world
- Define global warming and climate change as the real job killers
- Develop and promote worker-friendly climate strategies that define climate-protecting jobs and protection for affected workers as a central part of climate protection
- Make effective climate protection policies, including legislation, treaties, regulation, and public investment, part of their political agenda
- Use their political clout to support those policies
- Educate members and the public on the realities of global warming and what needs to be done to protect our future
- Pressure employers to go green, for example by making climate protection a bargaining issue
- Provide recruitment, apprenticeship, education, and training to develop the workforce skills necessary for a transition to a climate-safe economy
- Reduce the carbon footprint of their own buildings and operation.
- Collaborate with environmental allies by such means as rallies, demonstrations, lobbying, and media
- Promote climate protection in the AFL-CIO and state and local labor councils by such means as passing resolutions, sponsoring educational programs, and participating in activist events
- Join campaigns for a transition to low-carbon energy and against carbon polluters
- Initiate international tours and delegations to share strategies for climate protection with unions in related industries in other countries
- Divest union pension funds from fossil fuel corporations and invest them in the transition to a climate-safe economy.