

**Mayors' National Climate Action Agenda:**  
*An initiative to combat climate change and prepare for global warming*

**Background**

Climate science clearly shows the globe is warming at an alarming rate due to greenhouse gas emissions (GHG). Given that cities are responsible for 70% of all GHGs and are on the front lines of climate events and impacts, mayors are uniquely compelled and equipped to lead on the fight to stem climate change, as well as to adapt to it and prepare for the impacts of global warming. The unwillingness of the US Congress to support binding emission reductions further underlines the importance for mayors and cities to not only reduce GHGs but also help to create urgency for both federal cap and trade legislation and a global climate agreement.

Mayors have a unique voice and credibility to lend that is not currently well represented in the general discourse on climate change. Cities across the country are taking action, recognizing that the changing climate has tremendous implications for the livability, competitiveness and resilience of communities. Local governments have a major role to play in advocating for both federal legislation and international cooperation.

Over the coming year, U.S. mayors leading on the fight against global warming will come together to help build support and political will for President Obama to lead globally in creating an international agreement to be signed at the 2015 Paris COP. With subnational governments having a seat at the table for the first time in the UNFCCC process, mayors also can play a direct role to support the international agreement.

**Overview**

While serving on President Obama's Climate Preparedness and Resiliency Task Force, the Mayors of the largest cities represented – Los Angeles, Houston and Philadelphia – each recognized the urgency and need to join together in not just calling for action, but taking action on climate change. As mayors of three of the United States' five largest cities, Eric Garcetti, Annise Parker, and Michael Nutter know how to solve tough problems.

With cities on the front lines of climate change, Mayors Garcetti, Parker, and Nutter are launching the Mayors National Climate Action Agenda to build on their work from the President's Climate Task Force as well as through a number of other initiatives in which they share involvement, including: C40 Cities Climate Leadership Group, the U.S. Conference of Mayors, and the Urban Sustainability Directors Network. The Agenda will compliment and build off of these existing initiatives (as well as others such as ICLEI, etc.) but focus on mayor-to-mayor engagement, with the goal of building up the voice and presence of mayors on this critical issue.

Each mayor recognizes that they have an obligation to lead nationally on the shared challenge of mitigating GHGs, as well as preparing for the impacts of climate pollution. They hope that local leadership can ultimately model and drive a federal agenda towards binding emissions targets and a global climate agreement.

**What is the Mayors National Climate Action Agenda?**

By calling for national and international binding emission reductions agreements, establishing stronger inventory standards and reporting, committing to a set of local actions to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and growing the carbon offset market by removing barriers to municipal offset projects, the Mayors' National Climate Action Agenda is intended to make a statement that emission reduction projects – starting with existing cap and trade programs in the US - are not only viable, but essential initiatives that must be embraced and scaled across the country. Finally, Mayors Garcetti, Parker and Nutter will initiate a mayor-to-mayor, city-to-city outreach effort to bring mayors together over the coming year to develop a shared framework for local leadership and action.

## **The Mayors National Climate Action Agenda**

Mayors Garcetti, Parker, Nutter and each additional Mayor and city that join the initiative commit to:

1. Calling for binding emission reductions at the US federal level as well as a global emission reductions agreement;
2. Engaging in and supporting activities leading up to and during the 2015 negotiations in Paris to support the Obama Administration and other parties to create a global agreement;
3. Establishing and regularly reporting annually or bi-annually a municipal and community-wide GHG inventory (preferably with third party verification), while supporting standardization of municipal and community-wide inventories and reporting;
4. Establishing, or renewing, an existing aggressive GHG emissions reduction target for both the near term (i.e., by 2020 or sooner) and long term (e.g., 80% reductions by 2050);
5. Developing, or updating, a community climate action plan, which identifies specific strategies for meeting the emissions reduction target as well as tying mitigation with adaptation measures where possible;
6. Committing to finding an appropriate offset project(s), working collectively to remove barriers, and expanding offsets available to municipalities offered by the Climate Action Reserve, and other measures through the California cap and trade system (or other existing system).
7. Ensuring climate equity and environmental justice is prioritized in climate action plans.

Collectively this effort will be called, "The Mayors National Climate Action Agenda."

## **What Actions Will Mayors and Cities Take as Part of the "Climate Action Agenda"?**

In addition to calling for action at the national and global level as well as conducting regular inventories - including advancing an inventory standard for cities - and setting emission reduction targets for their cities, the mayors will also advance on the ground offset projects to expand the cap and trade system.

Houston, Philadelphia, and Los Angeles will each explore and develop climate offset projects that, if eligible under existing protocols, will be registered, measured, and verified through the Climate Action Reserve, the largest carbon offset registry in North America. Concurrently, they will work with partners to explore opportunities for cities to more readily participate in cap-and-trade programs and markets (e.g., exploring the potential for new protocols).

## **Why a New Initiative?**

Cities are paving the way on tackling climate change. Exciting work is happening across the country, led by local governments and non-governmental partner organizations. The Agenda compliments and builds off of existing efforts, striving to leverage the leadership of these three mayors to create a mayor-to-mayor led effort which would be unique in that it would be the only such initiative currently underway.

Currently, only a small number of small cities outside of California have registered projects through the Climate Action Reserve, the country's largest offset registry. This initiative would be the first to focus on bringing cities into the cap and trade market (which would be invaluable experience should federal cap and trade legislation be passed).

## **What's Next?**

The Mayors believe that action at the local level needs to be supported and ultimately scaled by national policies (and tie to a global agreement). To this end, they have recommended to The White House, via the President's Climate Task Force, the creation of a framework that can connect to an emerging federal program which could conceivably provide cities that commit to the above with additional points on federal funding applications and/or enhanced eligibility along with some targeted/limited funding.

The Mayors' commit to work toward November 2015 as the target date to sign on the greatest numbers of mayors; create standards for reporting emissions and tracking reductions; identify offset projects, strategies to tunnel through any barriers, and commence the offset projects; and conclude a year-long communications campaign of mayors on the need for binding emission reductions.