

Build Community Resilience

The federal government should partner with local governments to address climate change and build resilient communities

Local leaders are taking action on climate change because local governments are first responders on the front lines of delivering services and protecting residents. Local elected officials are stewards of taxpayer dollars and know that the cost of prevention pales in comparison to the cost of inaction — in terms of dollars, property and human life. Moreover, improving energy efficiency and investing in renewable energy makes good economic sense for residents, businesses and communities. While cities are prepared to forge ahead on these initiatives and actions, we urge the federal government to be a partner in these efforts in support of our economy and to build resilient communities.

The impacts of climate change and extreme weather events pose an especially pressing threat to persons with disabilities, economically disadvantaged households, the elderly, Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC), and other vulnerable populations. The coronavirus pandemic highlighted these inequities and historical policies and underinvestment that have long existed in our communities. Moreover, last year, communities simultaneously faced a record number of climate-related disasters, such as wildfires, extreme heat, and hurricanes, which further increased fiscal pressure on local governments, residents, and businesses. For these reasons, local leaders are prioritizing equity in addressing climate change and a green recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.

PRIORITIES

- **Take urgent action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions** across multiple sectors of the economy, including energy production, building efficiency, and transportation networks, and become carbon neutral to mitigate the effects of climate change and hold warming to 1.5°C.
- Provide **financial and technical assistance** to support local government **vulnerability assessments and adaptation implementation efforts**, and support programs that will help communities **reduce the risks** from disasters and natural hazards, such as the FEMA Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities (BRIC) program.
- Require **consideration of climate-related risks and vulnerabilities** as part of all federal policies, practices, investments, regulatory and other programs.

LEGISLATION NLC SUPPORTS

- **H.R. 425** – to reauthorize and expand the **Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant** (bipartisan) to help local governments promote energy efficiency and advance renewable energy projects, thereby increasing energy independence and reducing greenhouse gas emissions. [NLC letter of support](#) and [online action](#).

- **H.R. 2482 – MICROGRID Act** to address the harm blackouts, grid outages and public safety power shutoffs have on local communities due to increased extreme weather events by incentivizing the buildout and deployment of microgrids, which can provide backup power during emergencies. [April 13 press statement by Rep. Jimmy Panetta \(D-CA\)](#).
- **H.R. 1848 - LIFT America Act** to combat the climate crisis and protect our environment. Among other provisions, the bill supports clean energy investments through the Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant. [NLC social media statement](#).

LOCAL LEADERS IN THEIR OWN WORDS

- **Mayor John Tecklenburg, City of Charleston, SC**, on flooding and climate resilience:

"How will we secure Charleston's future, as the climate continues to change, and the waters continue to rise? At this point, we all understand the threat our city faces from flooding. And we know that without bold action, the future can only be one of surrender and retreat. Currently, we have a sound strategic plan in place and millions of dollars in flood-protection work underway throughout the city, with major projects moving forward in West Ashley, on the peninsula, and James and Johns Islands. In addition, we have three major decisions ahead of us in 2021 that will set the course of our climate and flooding protection strategy for years to come. First, we will consider a new citywide comprehensive plan that puts flooding at the center of our future development decisions by implementing the land use recommendations of the Dutch Dialogues. Second, we will decide whether to move forward with the Army Corps of Engineers' plan to build a sea wall around the peninsula--a project that would provide protection from storm surge and rising tides, as well as the potential for approximately one billion dollars in much-needed federal flooding assistance. And third, we are working on our city's Climate Action Plan, a detailed strategy to reduce emissions and help us do our part to mitigate climate change. And with that process now moving forward, we intend to bring our new plan to council this year."

- **Mayor Jim Donchess, City of Nashua, NH**, on reducing greenhouse gas emissions:

"Nashua is also doing its part in fighting global warming. Our City Energy Manager, Doria Brown, has stepped up our Green Action Plan. LED Street lights. Solar panels installed on the Lake Street Fire Station, on the transit garage, on Conway arena, and on three schools, Dr. Crisp, and Fairgrounds and Pennichuck. Converting our two high schools to LED lighting. Hybrid buses. These projects are reducing the City's energy use and saving money. Since 2016 we have reduced our greenhouse gas emissions from Public Works vehicles and Nashua Transit buses by 1,661 tons of carbon per year – down 40%."

- **Mayor Erin Mendenhall, Salt Lake City, UT**, on air quality impacts as a result of COVID emissions reductions:

"Before COVID, many of us would say that the biggest health concern facing our city was the quality of our air. We can and must take aggressive actions to end the epidemic of emissions in the Salt Lake Valley, not only to improve the quality of the air here, but to try to slow and lessen the impacts of climate change worldwide. Ironically, the pandemic proved that not only are there steps to lower emissions we can take right away, but that they can make a meaningful difference. With fewer City employees commuting to their office, we avoided CO2 emissions of 1,072 mT. That accounts for eight-tenths of a percent of our total municipal energy use from electricity, natural gas, and fleet. To put that into perspective, having the actions of individuals make an overall 1% difference is incredibly rare. We'll also look at the impacts of our City Fleet emissions, energy, and efficiency goals. We want to see if we've moved the needle, if we're being effective, and re-tool where we need to."