

TAKING ACTION: ADOPTING A CLIMATE EMERGENCY RESOLUTION ¹

Rationale for Adoption of a Climate Emergency Resolution:

The past decade has been the hottest in recorded human history. The natural disasters of 2020, consisting of wild fires, droughts, floods and hurricanes, and the worst pandemic in more than a century are all symptoms, at least in part, of accelerating global climate change. The meteorological effects of global climate change have long been evident, but the new corona virus (covid-19) has confronted us with a more immediate peril: the eruption of novel, highly lethal, and at least initially intractable diseases. The ultimate causes of covid-19 remain controversial, but biologists have long warned that that climate change, combined with habitat disruption (and economic globalization), will foster the eruption of devastating new pandemics for which we are utterly unprepared. In short, humanity no longer faces a merely *impending* climate crisis but an immediate climate *emergency* demanding immediate action.

President Biden's [acknowledgement](#) that the Climate Emergency is the most serious challenge confronting the human race sets the national tone for beginning to take that action. The President has promised that "Climate change will be at the center of our national security and foreign policy... [and] environmental justice will be at the center of all we do." To this end, the Biden administration introduced in April an infrastructure plan that includes numerous actions to address climate change in the next decade and beyond. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/speeches-remarks/2021/01/27/remarks-by-president-biden-before-signing-executive-actions-on-tackling-climate-change-creating-jobs-and-restoring-scientific-integrity/>

Governor Cuomo, in his 2021 State of the State address, recognized that economic recovery from covid-19 must also confront the Climate Emergency. He asserted that the post-covid-19 reconstruction must create a [Green Economy for New York](#) <https://www.governor.ny.gov/news/governor-cuomo-outlines-2021-agenda-reimagine->

¹ **National League Positions** For more than a decade the National LWV (LWV US) has identified climate change as a priority and on several occasions taken strong positions on the subject. For example,

[LWV US](#) President Dr. Deborah Ann Tuner issued a letter on January 27, 2021 supporting President Biden's Executive Orders on climate change, stating in part "Since the late 2000s, LWV has fervently advocated for a coordinated government response to global climate change. We have long lobbied for caps on pollution, investments in renewable energy, carbon pricing and stronger EPA regulations on methane and other gases. More recently, the League has expanded our work to focus on climate justice: the impacts of climate change on younger generations, indigenous communities and people of color, working-class neighborhoods, and families in economic transition." <https://www.lwv.org/newsroom/press-releases/lwv-statement-climate-executive-orders>

[LWV US has also endorsed](#) the concurrent Children's Fundamental Rights and Climate Recovery Resolution, introduced in both houses of Congress on September 23, 2020 by Representatives Jan Schakowsky, Pramila Jayapal, and Bobby Rush, and Senators Jeff Merkley, Cory Booker, and Ed Markey. This resolution, "in recognition of the disproportionate impact of climate change on youth and future generations, demands that our nation develop a national, just, comprehensive, and science-based climate recovery plan." <https://www.lwv.org/environment/lwvus-endorses-childrens-fundamental-rights-and-climate-recovery-resolution>

[rebuild-renew-](#)

[1#:~:text=Combined%20with%20our%20efforts%20in,while%20delivering%20to%20environmental%20justice](#) that is both ecologically sustainable and socially just. In support of the Governor's project and the further action that the climate emergency will demand, we urge all members of the League of Women Voters of New York State (LWV NYS) to join the LWVNYS in supporting the multi-national [Climate Emergency Declaration.org](#), <https://climateemergencydeclaration.org/> through its American affiliate, the [Climate Mobilization](#). <https://www.theclimatemobilization.org/our-impact/>

According to its mission statement, Climate Emergency Declaration's goal is: "to compel governments, at the local level and building upward, to adopt an emergency response to climate change and the broader ecological crisis. Entering 'emergency mode' is the critical first step to launching the comprehensive mobilization required to rescue and rebuild civilization."

The core of the Declaration is the commitment "to reach zero emissions and begin carbon draw down at emergency speed," within a decade. The expectation is that while implementing the proposal, local elected leaders will act as advocates for Climate Emergency mobilization at the local, state, and national levels. As of early April 2021, more than 1,920 governmental jurisdictions in at least 38 countries had adopted a Climate Emergency Declaration, and their number continues to grow. This figure includes 18 nation states as well as the entire European Union. These jurisdictions already represent nearly a billion people.

[As of 2019, seven state Leagues](#)—Alaska, California, Colorado, Florida, Illinois, Massachusetts, and Oregon-- have adopted resolutions in support of the Declaration of Climate Emergency. <https://www.lwv.org/blog/leagues-step-climate-action>

Any realistic attempt to meet the global climate challenge through public policy and legislation, will inevitably encounter partisan resistance. A powerful popular movement, arising from the grass roots, will be essential to implement a sufficiently ambitious agenda. Consistent with LWV US positions and the examples of New York's seven sister state Leagues, it is incumbent upon the LWV NYS to join the chorus of citizens who have properly identified the climate crisis as an emergency and adopt the following resolution.²

² **National Action Links to Success at the State Level** Separate and apart from the proposed resolution which is limited to action in New York State, League members are encouraged to individually lobby their representatives in the United States Congress to pass the [National Climate Emergency Act](#) of 2021, recently re-introduced by Vermont Senator Bernie Sanders, Oregon Representative Earl Blumenauer and New York Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez. This federal bill would unlock 136 statutory powers under the National Emergencies Act, powers that become accessible only under "extraordinary" circumstances. The current progressive escalation of earth's climate disruption qualifies as an "extraordinary" circumstance. <https://blumenauer.house.gov/media-center/press-releases/blumenauer-ocasio-cortez-and-sanders-introduce-legislation-mandate>

RESOLUTION ADOPTED AT THE LWV NYS CONVENTION 2021:

Whereas, an environmental condition adversely affecting Earth and its inhabitants once referred to as “climate change” has advanced to become a *climate emergency* including:

Ocean acidification, damage to marine ecosystems and food sources, and a rise in sea levels resulting in flooding and the displacement of coastal businesses and residences;

Extreme weather events, including extremes of temperature as well as increasingly devastating storms and wildfires, causing severe harm to America’s agriculture, forestry and tourism industries;

Adverse impacts on human health, as well as the introduction of new vectors for infectious disease, and

Species extinctions and related threats to biodiversity, with accompanying grave impacts on food and water security, economic security, and social-emotional wellbeing, and

Whereas, the world’s leading climate scientists predict that the climate crisis will catastrophically intensify if prompt public action is not taken through public policy and legislation to curb emissions, and remove atmospheric CO₂ through natural and technological sequestration, and

Whereas, the climate crisis disproportionately afflicts the most vulnerable among us: members of indigenous nations, people of color, rural and coastal communities and low-income households in general—all of whom have fewer resources to cope with the common consequences of climate change, such as property damage, displacement, job loss, and health problems, and

Whereas, prompt and robust mobilization of civil society acting in concert with all levels of government to achieve net zero greenhouse gas emissions is necessary to avert, or even to mitigate, the progressive and increasingly catastrophic deterioration of Earth’s environment and with it, massive societal disruption;

Therefore, be it resolved,

We, as delegates of New York State League of Women Voters’ local Leagues assembled at the 2021 LWV NYS Convention, call upon the LWV NYS Board and local Leagues to urge state and local governments to adopt and publicize Declarations of Climate Emergency appropriate to local conditions and take appropriate action to implement the Declarations of Climate Emergency.