



CT Roundtable on Climate & Jobs



July 30, 2015

**To: CT DEEP Commissioner Robert Klee
& the Governor's Council on Climate Change**

Re: Launching the Governor's Council on Change

The Connecticut Roundtable on Climate and Jobs greets with enthusiasm the first convening of the Governor's Council on Climate Change (GC3) this July 10.

We commend Governor Malloy for rebooting Connecticut's climate protection program and for reaffirming the targets laid out in the Global Warming Solutions Act: An 80% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions from 2001 levels by 2050. We are even more impressed by his charge to the first GC3 meeting that it provide national and international leadership and seek to accomplish "35 years of work but not take that long to get it done."

Climate change is the most important issue facing any of us for the rest of our lives. It is heartening to know that Connecticut has provided national leadership in crucial aspects of this fight, including passage of the first-in-the-nation state global warming legislation to reduce carbon emissions and creation of the nation's first Green Bank. The G3C may well be the most important deliberative body in the state of Connecticut right now. The fight against climate change requires consistent long-term planning and commitment. It is the responsibility of the G3C to provide them.

The governor called for interim targets so we may be sure we are on track for our ambitious 2050 goal. While the New England Governors are discussing a 2030 interim target, we believe we need more than one interim target. Ideally, we should have annual benchmarks to ensure we are on target and so that all of us can be held accountable to doing our part in reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

Climate protection will require the widest public, governmental, and institutional participation. We commend the DEEP for laying out a strong proposal for stakeholder engagement and accountability. This proposal should be implemented in a way that builds the public understanding, participation, and support. The greatest climate protection plan will be pointless if it is not backed by a public determination to implement it.

The Roundtable will give priority to having active participation from our constituencies in the work of each of the proposed working groups. We are particularly concerned about establishing early and effective avenues for input from environmental justice communities and labor. Working families and low-income urban communities face the greatest potential impacts from climate change.

It is easy to talk the climate protection talk but to leave the heavy lifting to future years and future generations. The Roundtable urges the GC3 to adopt a greenhouse gas reduction pathway that requires at a minimum a steady year-on-year rate of reduction, as described in our “equity curve” proposal.

Advances in technology are opening new possibilities for climate protection strategy. Renewable energy sources like wind and solar are becoming cheaper at an extraordinary rate. New forms of grid modernization and shared solar allow far cheaper, more flexible, and more reliable ways of providing energy than traditional, large-scale and top-down production and distribution.

In this context, established energy strategies can rapidly grow obsolete. Connecticut should take advantage of its new climate initiative to reevaluate the commitments it is currently making to continue and even expand fossil fuel infrastructure and other programs like imported Canadian hydropower that will lock us into dependence on large-scale energy imports for decades to come. The cost, reliability, and climate effects of each such commitment should be evaluated against the benefits of clean energy alternatives.

In the past, Connecticut climate policy has suffered from a stop-and-go pattern that has led to boom-and-bust for both workers and vendors. The GC3 should include as part of its responsibility, establishing plans and means to implement steps that assure sustained orderly development of the growing climate protection economic sector.

This growing sector also provides important co-benefits for the people of our state. It allows, for example, the phasing out of polluting fossil fuels facilities, contributing to public health especially in the low-income communities most vulnerable to such pollution.

One huge potential benefit of this growing sector can be to provide good, stable jobs for a wide range of Connecticut’s people. They can include manufacturing jobs, jobs for those who have been marginalized in the current labor market, and jobs for skilled union workers in the construction trades. Connecticut’s working families must benefit from our climate safety and resiliency efforts, among other reasons, so that the state has a healthy tax base from which to pay for addressing climate change aggressively. In every component of climate protection planning, considerations of how to create Connecticut jobs should be part of deliberations.

As Governor Malloy concluded in his remarks to the Council, “We should not waste the opportunity to lead. ... Let’s get the job done.”

On behalf of the Roundtable’s Steering Committee,

John Humphries, Organizer
CT Roundtable on Climate and Jobs
john.humphries1664@gmail.com
860-216-7972