City Council
Chief Clerk's Office
402 City Hall
Philadelphia, PA 19107

Legislation Text

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Urging the President of the United States to recommit and join with the Council of the City of Philadelphia in affirming its commitment to the Paris Climate Agreement.

WHEREAS, On December 12, 2015, representatives from 196 nations, including the United States, made an agreement at the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change to adopt green energy sources, cut down on climate change emissions, and limit the rise of global temperatures in what is known as the Paris Climate Agreement. The Paris Climate Agreement acknowledges that that the threat of climate change is "urgent and potentially irreversible", and can only be addressed through cooperation by all countries and deep reductions in global emissions; and

WHEREAS, On June 1, 2017, President Donald Trump announced that the United States was officially withdrawing from the Paris Climate Agreement, a decision that will have a detrimental environmental and social effect on all nations across the globe; and

WHEREAS, The Paris Climate Agreement is the first major international accord to address climate change that includes emissions reduction pledges from both developed and developing countries. Scientists have determined that developing countries already account for a majority of greenhouse gas emissions; China is the world's leading greenhouse gas emitter and India is likely to surpass the United States as the second largest greenhouse gas emitter before 2050; and

WHEREAS, By withdrawing from the Paris Climate Agreement, the Trump Administration made it clear that the United States would abandon the emissions targets set by former President Barack Obama to cut domestic emissions by 26% to 28% by 2025, and promote technological pathways to cutting emissions by 80% or more by 2050; and

WHEREAS, Energy experts say that poorer countries may be able to develop their economies without depending entirely on fossil fuels, with new technologies like renewable power and electric cars that allow the possibility of a widespread cleanup of the world's energy system. However, by withdrawing from the Paris Climate Agreement, the Trump Administration is walking away from many pledges, including pledges to help poor countries battle global warming and contributing to research budgets aimed at finding solutions to climate change; and

WHEREAS, By withdrawing from the Paris Climate Agreement, the Trump Administration is abolishing the credibility and dedication of the United States as a world leader behind environmental and sustainable initiatives, and failing to address the United States' contribution to climate change and global warming; and

WHEREAS, The Environmental Protection Agency ("EPA") reports that the United States accounts for 5% of the world's population and 22% of the world's carbon emissions that contribute to the Greenhouse Effect; and

ltrchWHEREAS, The EPA also reports that every year America creates 258 million tons of trash and 169 million tons end up in landfills and incinerators that also contribute to the growing concern of climate change;

and

WHEREAS, The National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences reports that changes in the greenhouse gas concentrations and other drivers alter the global climate and bring about a myriad of human health consequences. Environmental consequences of climate change include, but are not limited to, extreme heat waves; rising sea-levels; changes in precipitation resulting in flooding and droughts; intense hurricanes; and degraded air quality affect the physical, social, and psychological health of our most vulnerable citizens, including children; and

WHEREAS, Philadelphia must continue to be a leader in environmental and sustainability initiatives that contribute to a healthier and more vibrant environment for ourselves and the generations of Philadelphians that will follow; and

WHEREAS, The Kenney administration has made the environment and sustainability a key part of its approach to developing the City of Philadelphia; and has committed along with 83 other cities in the United States to uphold the Paris Climate Agreement commitments to voluntarily reduce emissions and pursue new technologies in order to stop global warming and climate change; and

WHEREAS, The Kenney administration introduced its "Greenworks" initiative that envisions a sustainable City where all Philadelphians will have access to healthy, affordable, and sustainable food and drinking water; breathe healthy air inside and outside; efficiently use clean energy that they can afford; be prepared for climate change; reduce carbon pollution; benefit from parks, trees, stormwater management, and healthy waterways; have access to safe, affordable, and low-carbon transportation; and benefit from sustainability education, employment, and business opportunities; and

WHEREAS, Investments in clean energy and efficiency produce economic opportunity for all citizens. In January 2017, the United States' Department of Energy ("DOE") reported that 800,000 workers were employed in low carbon emission generation technologies, including renewables. Just under 374,000 individuals work for solar firms. There are an additional 102,000 workers employed at wind firms across the nation. The solar workforce increased by 25% in 2016, while wind employment increased by 32%. The DOE also reported that 2.2 million Americans are employed in the design, installation, and manufacture of energy efficient products and services; and

WHEREAS, In 2014, 21.7% of Philadelphians were food insecure. Food insecure households lack access to enough food for an active, healthy life for all household members. Affordable, healthy food and drinking water reduce hunger, decrease diet-related diseases, and prolong life. The Philadelphia Water Department has committed to consistently produce high-quality drinking water, achieving Partnership for Safe Water quality standards that are far stricter than state and federal water quality regulatory requirements; and

WHEREAS, In 2012, the Philadelphia City Council passed the Energy Benchmarking Ordinance that established a system of benchmarking and reporting of energy and water usage data for non-residential buildings with 25,000 square feet or more; and

WHEREAS, In 2014, Philadelphia buildings emitted 9.8 million metric tons of carbon pollution. To reduce energy costs and carbon pollution, the City of Philadelphia is working with PECO to explore a citywide LED streetlight conversion; and

WHEREAS, In efforts to implement air pollution controls, SEPTA piloted their new zero-emissions, battery

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electric buses in July 2016. Additionally in May 2017, SEPTA's board unanimously authorized the installation of solar photovoltaic systems at four bus and rail shops across the City of Philadelphia. The project is SEPTA's biggest solar initiative, and when finished, will represent one of the largest solar installations in the City; and

WHEREAS, In 2016, City Council and the Philadelphia Energy Authority announced the Philadelphia Energy Campaign, a 10-year, $1 billion public-private investment to expand sustainable energy and create 10,000 jobs in the energy retrofit and clean energy sectors; and

WHEREAS, In April 2017, City Council and the Philadelphia Energy Authority announced the Solarize Philly initiative, a citywide project designed to jump start the residential solar market by making it easy and affordable to go solar at home. Solarize Philly will add 500 solar roofs in Philadelphia by the end of 2018; and

WHEREAS, It is important to reaffirm the consensus of the environmental community that the mission to protect and preserve the environment is one of vital importance. Global warming and climate change affects everyone and everything on the planet. The United States must embrace the values of lower carbon emissions and a cleaner energy economy by recommitting to the Paris Climate Agreement. It is imperative that all cities of the United States lead in the transition to a clean energy economy and empower citizens to build sustainable communities; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, THAT THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, Does hereby urge the President of the United States to recommit and join with the Council of the City of Philadelphia in affirming its commitment to the Paris Climate Agreement.

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