

Legislation Text

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Authorizing the Committee on the Environment to hold public hearings to assess the City of Philadelphia's response to the findings of the 2018 National Climate Assessment.

WHEREAS, The Trump administration issued the latest installment of the National Climate Assessment on November 23, 2018. The administration is required to issue the quadrennial report due to the Global Change Research Act of 1990, a law which establishes "a comprehensive and integrated United States research program which will assist the nation and the world to understand, assess, predict, and respond to human-induced and natural processes of global change." Were it not required by law, the administration may not have issued the report at all; and

WHEREAS, The 2018 National Climate Assessment offers clear and unambiguous warnings about the impact of climate change on the Country. According to the report, "the impacts of global climate change are already being felt in the United States and are projected to intensify in the future." It further states, "Climate change is projected to significantly affect human health, the economy, and the environment in the United States, particularly in futures with high greenhouse gas emissions and limited or no adaptation. Recent findings reinforce the fact that without substantial and sustained reductions in greenhouse gas emissions and regional adaptation efforts, there will be substantial and far-reaching changes over the course of the 21st century with negative consequences for a large majority of sectors"; and

WHEREAS, Scientists, including those involved in the National Climate Assessment, overwhelmingly support the idea of anthropogenic climate change. According to NASA, multiple studies published in peer-reviewed scientific journals show that 97% or more of actively publishing climate scientists agree that climate-warming trends over the past century are extremely likely due to human activities. Mainstream scientists are not "on both sides of the picture" as the Administration has stated; and

WHEREAS, In contrast to the President's statements, one of the main takeaways of the National Climate Assessment is that climate change comes with very real economic costs. The report highlights: "With continued growth in emissions at historic rates, annual losses in some economic sectors are projected to reach hundreds of billions of dollars by the end of the century - more than the current gross domestic product (GDP) of many U.S. states"; and

WHEREAS, Climate change also poses a looming crisis for public health. Rising temperatures impact health in both direct and indirect ways. From increasing the frequency, intensity, and duration of heat waves, to increasing the range of mosquito-borne diseases like West Nile and Zika and decreasing the quality of the air we breathe, it is clear that climate change is a health emergency of the first order; and

WHEREAS, The 2018 National Climate Assessment maintains that we still have the capacity to limit the effects of climate change. To do so, awareness of climate change must extend to all levels of government. The City of Philadelphia must continue to take the lead in advancing proactive climate change solutions, a number of which are already in development thanks to unprecedented efforts by the Office of Sustainability, the Philadelphia Energy Authority, and various city agencies and departments; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, That we hereby authorize the Committee on the Environment to hold public hearings to assess the City of Philadelphia's response to the findings of the 2018 National Climate Assessment.