

118TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. CON. RES. 56

Recognizing that the climate crisis disproportionately affects the health, economic opportunity, and fundamental rights of children, expressing the sense of Congress that leadership by the United States is still urgently needed to address the climate crisis, and acknowledging the need of the United States to develop a national, comprehensive, science-based, and just climate recovery plan to phase out fossil fuel emissions, protect and enhance natural carbon sequestration, and put the United States on a path toward stabilizing the climate system.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

JULY 13, 2023

Ms. SCHAKOWSKY (for herself, Ms. JAYAPAL, Ms. LEE of California, Ms. BARRAGÁN, Ms. TLAIB, Mr. GRIJALVA, Mr. RASKIN, Ms. ESCOBAR, Ms. OMAR, Mr. ESPAILLAT, Mr. TRONE, Mr. NADLER, Ms. BROWNLEY, Mr. COHEN, Mr. LYNCH, Ms. NORTON, Ms. CHU, Ms. BUSH, Ms. CROCKETT, Mr. JOHNSON of Georgia, Ms. WILLIAMS of Georgia, Mr. KHANNA, Mr. SARBANES, Ms. JACKSON LEE, Ms. BONAMICI, Mr. BLUMENAUER, Ms. CASTOR of Florida, Mrs. TRAHAN, Ms. MCCOLLUM, Mr. CÁRDENAS, Mr. MULLIN, Mr. DAVIS of Illinois, Ms. CLARKE of New York, Ms. TITUS, Ms. STANSBURY, Ms. WILSON of Florida, Ms. SCANLON, Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ, Ms. LEE of Pennsylvania, Mr. MCGOVERN, Ms. HOYLE of Oregon, Ms. TOKUDA, Mr. FROST, Ms. ROSS, Ms. JACOBS, Mr. MORELLE, Mrs. NAPOLITANO, Mr. POCAN, Ms. VELÁZQUEZ, Mrs. WATSON COLEMAN, Ms. KAMLAGER-DOVE, Mr. ROBERT GARCIA of California, Mr. GARCÍA of Illinois, Ms. SALINAS, Mrs. FOUSHEE, Ms. DEGETTE, Mr. SOTO, Mrs. CHERFILUS-McCORMICK, Ms. DEAN of Pennsylvania, Mr. CONNOLLY, Mr. VARGAS, Ms. MENG, Mr. THANEDAR, Ms. DELAURO, and Ms. PINGREE) submitted the following concurrent resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Energy and Commerce

CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

Recognizing that the climate crisis disproportionately affects

the health, economic opportunity, and fundamental rights of children, expressing the sense of Congress that leadership by the United States is still urgently needed to address the climate crisis, and acknowledging the need of the United States to develop a national, comprehensive, science-based, and just climate recovery plan to phase out fossil fuel emissions, protect and enhance natural carbon sequestration, and put the United States on a path toward stabilizing the climate system.

Whereas a stable climate system at the founding of the United States allowed human life and human civilization to flourish;

Whereas the United States was founded on the deeply rooted principle of securing “the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity”;

Whereas the Constitution of the United States protects the fundamental rights to life, liberty, property, and equal protection of the laws;

Whereas a climate system capable of sustaining human life is fundamental to a free and ordered society and preserves other fundamental rights, including the rights to life, liberty, property, personal security, family autonomy, bodily integrity, and the ability to learn, practice, and transmit cultural and religious traditions;

Whereas fossil fuel use for energy in the United States has increased since the Industrial Revolution and accelerated such that the fossil fuel-based energy system in the United States has led to carbon dioxide emissions from the United States constituting more than $\frac{1}{4}$ of cumulative global carbon dioxide emissions;

Whereas the Federal Government sets the energy policy of the United States, which has resulted in an energy system in the United States in which approximately 80 percent of the energy produced in the United States comes from fossil fuels;

Whereas the United States is the world's largest producer of oil and gas, in substantial part through the Federal Government's leasing of Federal public lands and waters for fossil fuel extraction and through actively promoting, permitting, and subsidizing fossil fuel energy development and consumption;

Whereas there is an overwhelming scientific consensus that human-caused climate change is occurring, that the scale of recent changes across the climate system is unprecedented in a multimillennial context, and that the present accelerated rate of global heating, glacier and ice sheet melting, sea level rise, and ocean acidification is a result of the buildup of atmospheric greenhouse gas emissions, primarily consisting of carbon dioxide emissions, largely from the combustion of fossil fuels;

Whereas the accumulation of current atmospheric CO₂ levels to an annual average of 419 parts per million (ppm) in 2022 has caused a dangerous planetary energy imbalance, equivalent to the amount of energy of exploding more than 400,000 Hiroshima atomic bombs per day, 365 days per year, across the planet;

Whereas current climate science and real-world observations of the energy imbalance demonstrate that the approximately 1 degree Celsius of warming that has already occurred as a result of human-caused climate change is already dangerous and negatively affecting all aspects of society and the economy of the United States;

Whereas the last time atmospheric concentration of CO₂ was around 400 ppm, the seas were up to 70 to 90 feet higher, the Greenland and West Antarctic ice sheets largely collapsed, and coral reefs suffered a major extinction;

Whereas similar conditions will result if the United States does not drastically reduce CO₂ emissions in addition to naturally sequestering and drawing down excess concentrations of CO₂ already in the atmosphere from cumulative historic emissions this century;

Whereas the longer the length of time atmospheric carbon dioxide concentrations remain at dangerous levels, the risk of locking in dangerous warming-driven feedback loops and triggering accelerated heating and irreversible catastrophic impacts increases;

Whereas climate change is a threat to national security, as it contributes to and exacerbates global instability and conflict;

Whereas today's children were born into a climate system that is harmful to their health and well-being because of human-caused climate change;

Whereas children are uniquely vulnerable to human-caused climate change because of their developing bodies, higher exposure to air, food, and water relative to their body weight, unique behavior patterns, dependence on caregivers, and longevity on the planet;

Whereas human-caused climate change is a public health emergency that adversely and disproportionately impacts the physical health of children through, among other impacts—

(1) increases in extreme weather events, including increases in heavy rainfall, flooding, and hurricanes, that

cause disruptive evacuations, school closures, and displacement;

(2) increases in the frequency and intensity of extreme heat waves and rising temperatures that cause increased heat exposure and illness, which is a leading cause of death and illness in high school athletes, with nearly 10,000 episodes of heat illness occurring annually;

(3) increases in infant mortality by 25 percent on extremely hot days, with the first 7 days of life representing a period of critical vulnerability;

(4) increases in drier conditions and drought, leading to an earlier wildfire season peak, and increased wildfire season length, wildfire frequency, and extent of burned area, exposing children to wildfire smoke that causes substantial eye symptoms, debilitating headaches and nausea, and upper and lower respiratory symptoms that lead to increased rates of asthma-related hospitalizations and emergency room visits;

(5) decreased air quality as children are especially susceptible to air pollution given their developing lungs, higher ventilation rate, and higher levels of physical activity;

(6) increases in pollen concentration and a longer pollen season that contributes to allergic rhinitis, where 8.4 percent of children suffer from allergic rhinitis;

(7) altered infectious disease patterns; and

(8) increases in food and water insecurity;

Whereas the best scientific information available projects a 15- to 30-foot rise in sea level by 2100 if current trends continue, with ever greater rises and acceleration in subsequent centuries, resulting in increased erosion and the loss of land, causing the loss of communities, homes, infrastructure, agriculture, and coastal ecosystems for af-

affected children, until such time as levels of CO₂ in the atmosphere are dramatically reduced, and steps are taken to cool the upper portion of the ocean;

Whereas extreme weather events can negatively impact children's mental health due to—

- (1) family loss or separation;
- (2) personal injury or injury of loved ones;
- (3) damage or loss to personal property and pets;
- (4) school interruption;
- (5) scarcities of food, water, and medicine;
- (6) public service outages;
- (7) displacement, along with the loss of a sense of home and a safe space;
- (8) loss of nature and cultural activities; and
- (9) feelings of uncertainty about the future and a belief that their government is not protecting them from climate change, all of which result in anxiety, trauma, shock, post-traumatic stress disorder, and chronic impacts;

Whereas, without immediate steps to address human-caused climate change, the health impacts on children will increase in severity and in terms of the number of children impacted and exposed to dangerous conditions, and will cost the United States billions of dollars per year by the end of the century, with costs growing more expensive as the accumulation of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere increases, and as chronic psychological consequences of climate-related stress increase;

Whereas children will largely shoulder the costs of human-caused climate change, and further increases in the global temperature will saddle children with an enormous,

perhaps incalculable, cost burden, undermining the economic security of children and the United States;

Whereas, given their vulnerabilities, children are deserving of special consideration and protection with respect to human-caused climate change;

Whereas children are a politically powerless minority without economic or political power to influence climate and energy policy, as they are denied the right to vote until they become 18 years old, and their interests are subjugated to the interests of adults;

Whereas children on the front lines of human-caused climate change across the United States and globally have risen up and called upon government leaders around the world to take concrete, science-based, and equitable action to address human-caused climate change and to account for intergenerational inequities to ensure environmental and climate justice for their generation and future generations, including children from vulnerable communities that have borne the brunt of climate change;

Whereas children within environmental justice communities, including communities of color, low-income communities, and Indigenous communities, that have contributed the least to emissions—

(1) have long suffered from systemic environmental racism and social and economic injustices;

(2) are more likely to reside in areas with greater exposure to air pollution, experience long-term exposure, and be disproportionately burdened by adverse health or environmental effects, including public health pandemics;

(3) are subjected to disproportionate energy burdens; and

(4) have less access to resources needed to cope with climate-related impacts;

Whereas global atmospheric CO₂ concentrations must be reduced to below 350 ppm by the end of the century, with further reductions thereafter, in order to restore the planet's energy balance, stabilize the climate system, and protect the planet's ice sheets and oceans for posterity;

Whereas current and future adverse public health and other impacts and costs to children and the United States can be significantly mitigated if the United States acts promptly to reduce its emissions from fossil fuels;

Whereas numerous experts have concluded that there are multiple technically and economically feasible pathways to place all sectors of the United States economy on an emissions reduction path consistent with returning global atmospheric CO₂ to 350 ppm by 2100;

Whereas producing the energy in the United States with non-carbon-emitting sources will result in energy costs within the range of recent experience, ultimately saving consumers money and stabilizing the cost of energy, while increasing the number of jobs across multiple sectors and the supply chain, and result in many co-benefits, including public health and quality-of-life improvements, the prevention of premature death, infrastructural stability, and biodiversity protection; and

Whereas multiple executive departments and agencies with authority delegated by Congress can exercise such authority to prevent and respond to climate change, including the Executive Office of the President, the Council on Environmental Quality, the Office of Management and Budget, and the Office of Science and Technology Policy,

the Department of Agriculture, the Department of Commerce, the Department of Defense, the Department of Energy, the Department of the Interior, the Department of State, the Department of Transportation, and the Environmental Protection Agency: Now, therefore, be it

1 *Resolved by the House of Representatives (the Senate*
2 *concurring)*, That it is the sense of Congress that—

3 (1) United States leadership is still urgently
4 needed to act to address the human-caused climate
5 crisis that disproportionately affects the health, eco-
6 nomic opportunity, and fundamental rights of chil-
7 dren in the United States; and

8 (2) there is a human-caused climate crisis
9 that—

10 (A) has inspired children across the United
11 States to organize and demand immediate gov-
12 ernment action to protect their fundamental
13 rights from the perils of climate change; and

14 (B) demands a national, comprehensive,
15 science-based, and just climate recovery plan
16 prepared by the departments and agencies of
17 the executive branch with delegated authority
18 over energy and climate policy, that puts the
19 United States on a trajectory consistent with
20 reducing global atmospheric CO₂ to below 350

1 parts per million by the year 2100 to uphold
2 children's fundamental rights.

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