

Climate-Neutrality Resolution

Background:

The following resolution has come out of a grassroots campaign led by students across all eight universities of the Ivy League. Various members of the EcoReps, a group dedicated to promoting green living in residence halls, represented Columbia University in this initiative. Since it was finalized several weeks ago, this resolution has been quite successful. Already, the President of Cornell has endorsed this effort.

The Columbia College Student Council ought to pass this resolution as well. We will be the first student council to do so and we will set an example in the Ivy League. Ivy Council, due to meet in April, is also considering to pass this resolution as a way to encourage other student councils to get involved with this effort.

Upon passing this resolution, interested members of student council should join those submitting this resolution in finding ways for our council to lobby the administration to make for a more sustainable Columbia. Our efforts can range from supporting green living campaigns to lobbying for Columbia to purchase more sustainable forms of energy.

Resolution:

PREAMBLE

Global climate change as caused by anthropogenic green house gas emissions poses an unprecedented threat to our global community. The urgency of this threat necessitates action now. Universities have the resources and the responsibility to lead the way in reducing emissions, encouraging renewable energy sources, and facilitating stakeholder involvement.

WHEREAS Global climate change is the greatest problem facing our generation as it threatens our world with;

- rising temperatures
- drought
- sea level rise
- increasingly destructive extreme weather
- loss of biodiversity
- changes in availability of water resources
- public health implications
- the exacerbation of poverty and injustice by disproportionately affecting low income areas and other marginalized communities
- the displacement of millions of people;

WHEREAS The disproportionate impacts of climate change on developing

countries and those who contributed least to the problem is one of the starkest examples of global injustice.

WHEREAS Solving global climate change to create a just, safe, and prosperous world is an opportunity and a challenge that our generation can meet with:

- clean, renewable energy solutions such as wind, solar, and geothermal technology
- an emphasis on energy efficiency

WHEREAS A just transition to clean renewable energy sources such as wind, solar, and geothermal technology and an emphasis on energy efficiency will have benefits that flow across society, such as:

- Cleaner air and reductions in pollution that today harm the health of millions of Americans and countless more around the world.
- The creation of new, stable jobs in the areas hardest hit by the loss of American manufacturing, long-lasting rural jobs related to dispersed energy technology, and a future for American automakers.
- A safer world where America's foreign policy need not be based on securing oil reserves.

WHEREAS Embracing environmental sustainability and clean energy is in concert with universities' existing goals and values, including service to society, realization of social justice, the training of future leaders, and technological advancement;

WHEREAS Ivy League universities are in a unique position in society to demonstrate leadership towards global climate change and have the academic and financial resources to be global leaders on this issue;

WHEREAS We recognize that this is a global effort which nations, states, cities, corporations, community groups and other educational institutions have already begun to address with binding policies;

WHEREAS The UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and America's best climate scientists have warned that global carbon emissions must peak and begin declining within ten years and be reduced by at least 80% below 1990 levels by 2050 if we are to avoid the worst projected effects of global climate change;

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED THAT:

- The Ivy League Universities must respond to this moral responsibility by adopting the goal of individual and collective climate neutrality through a combination of, but not limited to, increased energy efficiency, renewable energy generation, and the purchase of carbon offsets.
- Total emissions reductions should be in line with or exceed

scientific recommendations of 80% reductions below 1990 levels by 2050.

- It should be ensured that any existing emission reduction plans are on a trajectory toward this goal and that all Ivy League Universities that have not already adopted emissions reductions plans do so immediately and aim to meet or surpass this long term goal.

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT:

- In adopting new energy sources, our universities should guarantee that we are purchasing truly clean, renewable energy that does not include sources, such as waste incineration, that are passed off as "renewable" yet are detrimental to human health and to the environmental, especially of marginalized communities in which these tend to be sited.

- When purchasing carbon offsets, our universities should ensure that we can be confident that we are investing in effective and just solutions to global climate change.

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