

Be It Resolved That:

The members of the Vermont State Employees Association do hereby declare a Climate Emergency.

WHEREAS, in April 2016 world leaders from 175 countries recognized the threat of climate change and the urgent need to combat it by signing the Paris Agreement, agreeing to keep warming “well below 2°C - above pre-industrial levels” and to “pursue efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5°C”;

WHEREAS, the death and destruction already wrought by global warming of approximately 1°C demonstrate that the Earth is already too hot for safety and justice, as attested by increased and intensifying wildfires, floods, rising seas, diseases, droughts and extreme weather;

WHEREAS, climate change and the global economy’s overshoot of ecological limits are driving the sixth mass extinction of species, which could devastate much of life on Earth for the next 10 million years;

WHEREAS, the United States of America has disproportionately contributed to the climate and ecological crises and has repeatedly obstructed global efforts to transition toward a sustainable economy, and thus bears an extraordinary responsibility to rapidly solve these crises;

WHEREAS, restoring a safe and stable climate requires an emergency mobilization on a scale not seen since World War II to reach zero greenhouse gas emissions across all sectors at wartime speed, to rapidly and safely drawdown or remove all the excess carbon from the atmosphere, and to implement measures to protect all people and species from the consequences of abrupt climate change;

WHEREAS, the term “Just Transition” is a framework for a fair shift to an economy that is ecologically sustainable, equitable, and just for all its members;

WHEREAS, just transition strategies were first forged by a ‘blue-green’ alliance of labor unions and environmental justice groups, who saw the need to phase out the industries that were harming workers, community health, and the Planet, while also providing just pathways for workers into new livelihoods;

WHEREAS, just transition initiatives shift the economy from dirty energy to energy democracy, from funding highways to expanding public transit, from incinerators and landfills to zero waste, from industrial food systems to food sovereignty, from car-dependent sprawl and unbridled growth to smart urban development without displacement, and from rampant, destructive, over-development to habitat and ecosystem restoration;

WHEREAS, justice requires that frontline communities, which have historically borne the brunt of the extractive fossil-fuel economy, participate actively in the planning and implementation of this mobilization effort at all levels of government, and that they benefit first from the transition to a renewable energy economy;

WHEREAS, fairness demands a guarantee of high-paying, good-quality jobs with comprehensive benefits for all and many other tenets of a Green New Deal effort as the mobilization to restore a safe climate is launched;

NOW BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED, the members of the Vermont State Employees Association declares that a climate emergency threatens our state, nation, civilization, humanity and the natural world;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, we commit to educating Vermonters about the climate emergency and working to catalyze a just transition and climate emergency mobilization effort at local, state, national, and global levels to provide maximum protection for all the people and species of the world;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, we underscore the need for full community participation, inclusion, and support, and recognize that the residents of Vermont, and community organizations of faith, youth, labor, business, academic institutions, homeowners' associations and environmental, economic, racial, gender, family and disability justice and indigenous, immigrant and women's rights organizations, and other such allies, who will be integral to, and in the leadership of the mobilization effort;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, we commit to keeping the concerns of vulnerable or marginalized communities central to all just transition and climate emergency mobilization, effort planning processes, and to inviting and encouraging such communities to actively participate in order to advocate directly for their needs;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the members of the Vermont State Employees Association call on all union members and all governments and peoples worldwide to declare a Climate Emergency; and to initiate a just transition and climate emergency mobilization effort to reverse global warming by restoring near pre-industrial global average temperatures and greenhouse gas concentrations, that immediately halts the development of all new fossil fuel infrastructure, rapidly phases out all fossil fuels and the technologies which rely upon them, ends greenhouse gas emissions as quickly as possible, initiates an effort to safely draw down carbon from the atmosphere, transitions to regenerative agriculture, ends the sixth mass extinction, and creates and guarantees high-quality, good-paying jobs with comprehensive benefits for those who will be impacted by this transition.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, we call on union members and all citizens to support our youth and global actions for climate on Friday, September 20, 2019, and to support the actions needed now to sustain the fruits of our work, our communities in Vermont, our country, and the well-being of the entire Planet.

(Resolution to be adopted September 14, 2019 at the Annual Meeting of the Vermont State Employees Association.)