

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

April 14, 2015

National Governors Association
444 North Capitol Street NW
Suite 267
Washington, D.C. 20001-1512

Dear Governors:

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, from Kentucky, recently wrote to you urging defiance of the climate change laws and regulations of the United States government, namely, the Environmental Protection Agency's forthcoming Clean Power Plan to cut carbon pollution from power plants. As you evaluate that advice, you might want to consider what other Kentucky voices say about climate change.

Kentucky is already crafting its plan for complying with the Clean Power Plan. The Commonwealth of Kentucky's decision to work with the EPA and prepare a plan was based, according to the Kentucky Energy and Environment Cabinet, on what "the overwhelming majority of our stakeholders are telling us."

The Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources' "Wildlife Action Plan" quotes the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) thus: "warming of the climate system is unequivocal." The Kentucky Wildlife Action Plan reports that "Climate change has the potential to exacerbate existing conservation threats . . . in Kentucky by altering both terrestrial and aquatic systems." Kentucky's cities—Lexington, Louisville, Frankfort, Bowling Green, and Villa Hills—have signed the U.S. Mayors' Climate Protection Agreement to (quoting the City of Lexington) "act locally to reduce the impacts of climate change by lowering (manmade) greenhouse gas emissions."

Even fossil fuel companies get it in Kentucky. Columbia Gas of Kentucky pledges to "Meet the Climate Challenge," "through business activities which promote sustained economic growth in a manner consistent with our environmental obligations," including "reasonable policies addressing climate change" and "appropriately crafted legislation on climate change."

Kentucky Woodlands Magazine reports that "The world is changing right before our eyes . . . climate change is happening as you read this article," and describes the result as "global climate weirdness." Horses matter to Kentucky, and Horse and Rider magazine has reported on how climate change might affect the spread of infectious disease, harm horses' health, and have a huge economic impact. Horse and Rider turned to Dr. Craig Carter of the University of Kentucky, an expert in equine infectious disease, who said, "It's not just horses (and people) at risk . . . climate change affects all forms of life." According to Dr. Carter, "It's a scary thing to watch."

At the University of Kentucky, Paul Vincelli, a professor at the University of Kentucky's Cooperative Extension Service, says this: "In the scientific community, it is widely accepted that the global climate is changing, and that human activities which produce 'greenhouse gases' are a principal cause. Greenhouse gases have a strong capacity to trap heat in the lower atmosphere, even though they are present at trace concentrations." Vincelli concludes: "This trapped heat is driving many of the recent changes in the Earth's climate, including rising temperatures in the oceans, on Earth's surface, and in the lower atmosphere." The University of Kentucky warns: "Regardless of what you may read on blogs or in the media, there is almost no meaningful scientific controversy on these points."

The Wildcats are not alone. Kentucky State University has won a Climate Change Fellowship, to "engage college students in climate change education and action" and "in-depth training on climate change, how to best teach the basics of climate change." Western Kentucky University hosts the Kentucky Climate Center on their campus in Bowling Green. Eastern Kentucky University offers courses on global climate change, and has an Environmental Research Institute whose website links right to the IPCC work on climate change. Northern Kentucky University has signed the American College and University Presidents' Climate Commitment to "climate neutrality," i.e. having "no net greenhouse gas emissions."

Senator McConnell's own alma mater, the University of Louisville, has sponsored talks about "how climate change is a measurable reality and how people have contributed to the trends"; bearing "personal witness of the detrimental effects of global climate change over 25 years of polar exploring"; and about "fragile soil ecosystems and their role in climate change"; and has held "Climate Change Teach-Ins," where students, faculty and staff joined together "to inform, inspire and educate others about the climate change crisis."

Before you take advice about climate change from Senator McConnell please consider first what so many knowledgeable voices from the Bluegrass State are saying about climate change, and second how failing to act gives up your state's right to set its own course of action toward a clean energy future. His is not the voice from ahead saying the trail is not safe; his is the voice obstinately staying behind saying, "Let's not even try."

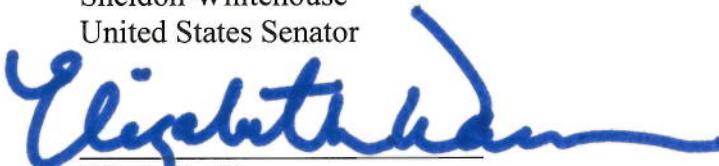
Sincerely,



Sheldon Whitehouse
United States Senator



Barbara Boxer
United States Senator



Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator



Al Franken
United States Senator



Bernard Sanders
United States Senator