

A CALL TO THE BAR: LAWYERS FOR COMMON SENSE ON CLIMATE CHANGE

MISSION, SHARED PRINCIPLES, AND PLAN FOR ACTION

I. Mission

Our mission is to engage the entire the legal community in the shared purpose of protecting all people and future generations from the impacts of climate disruption.

Climate change is real and is caused primarily by greenhouse gas emissions, particularly humans burning fossil fuels as an energy source. It is happening rapidly and, according to leading scientific reports, will lead to irreversible harm in as little as twelve years if not halted or substantially slowed. It imperils the planet we share. The moral case for immediate action is compelling.

Solutions exist but must be aggressively pursued. We must stop or dramatically reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and we must address the consequences of climate disruption. This will require adoption of new policies, laws, and regulations at the international, national, regional, and local levels, and reinvention and revitalization of the private economy. We must deploy a broad range of legal tools – from lawmaking and litigation to deal-making and corporate transformation – to effectuate a fair but decisive shift away from fossil fuels to new energy sources, more efficient energy use, and new modes of economic and social activity. Our tools include carbon pricing, greenhouse gas regulation, support for

carbon sequestration and other sustainability practices, and removal of legal barriers to building a clean economy.

We seek to rally lawyers as advocates for legal action to fight climate disruption. Lawyers have played critical roles in past movements for social and environmental justice, and we recognize that climate solutions must advance justice between differently affected geographic and economic communities, and across generations. We are called to place our legal experience, and our personal and professional relationships, in the service of the public good.

II. Shared Principles

We embrace the following principles:

a. Public Action Now.

All levels of government must immediately begin deploying the broadest range of legal tools to reduce greenhouse gas emissions as rapidly as possible. These tools include not only market pricing and additional regulation, but also removal of existing legal barriers to decarbonization and elimination of government support for fossil fuels. All levels of government should address the harms caused by climate disruption.

b. Private Action Now.

Business and industry, as well as other private actors, should deploy a similarly broad range of tools to reduce greenhouse gas emissions as rapidly as possible. Private sector actions will include developing new forms of legal documentation to support a low-carbon economy, adoption of self-regulatory

industry performance and reporting standards, influencing and supporting markets that offer low carbon products and services, and creation of new models of corporate governance.

c. Every Lawyer Has a Role to Play.

The social and economic forces opposed to climate action are enormous. We will not make a difference unless we engage many lawyers throughout the United States and the world and across the spectrum of legal specialties and practice areas. This must include lawyers at firms large to small, in-house lawyers, government lawyers, public interest lawyers, law professors, retired and other non-practicing lawyers and future lawyers.

d. Climate Justice.

Climate disruption is not just an environmental and energy issue, but more fundamentally a human rights issue. The damaging effects of climate change are already being felt, and in many cases the hardest hit will be those already suffering the effects of social and economic disadvantage. It will negatively affect all people in time, but the negative impact will be felt soonest and hardest by the poor and vulnerable. As lawyers, we have a duty to advocate for justice for all people.

III. Plan for Action

We lawyers, individually, and collectively as a profession, are privileged with talents, training, resources, and relationships that we can use to advance climate solutions. These same attributes can also make us valuable participants in many forms of climate sustainability activism, including influencing other lawyers and

legal organizations, elected official and policymakers, corporate governance and business practices, philanthropy, grassroots protest and other forms of collective action.

The legal community has been mobilized to advance civil rights and promote diversity and opportunity in the profession and other workplaces. These once contested objectives, though often not yet fully realized, are now acknowledged values by most in our profession. Similarly, lawyers and legal organizations of all kinds must make climate sustainability a core value and responsibility of our profession.

Overall, we work to persuade lawyers, legal organizations, policymakers, and elected officials of the need to deploy the broadest range of legal tools to reduce greenhouse gas emissions as rapidly as possible. We provide lawyers and legal organizations with specific opportunities to get involved in the fight against climate change. Our plan is simple. We first ask ourselves to commit to this Mission Statement, Shared Principles, and Plan for Action. Then we ask other lawyers and legal organizations to do the same. We engage in personal and collective advocacy, we communicate with each other about our ongoing efforts, and we plan strategies for continuing, intensifying, and refining our efforts. We work with people in other fields, including scientists, economists, and political and public relations specialists, about how best to further the goal of stopping or dramatically reducing greenhouse gas emissions and addressing the consequences of climate disruption. Based on our

expertise as lawyers, we work on developing and promoting common sense climate change solutions.

March 15, 2019

On behalf of A Call to the Bar: Lawyers for Common Sense on Climate Change and the organizers of Third National Conference of Lawyers Committed to Addressing the Climate Emergency:

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