

Open Letter from Florida Mayors to Senator Marco Rubio

January 21, 2016

Dear Senator Rubio:

As mayors representing municipalities across Florida, we call on you to acknowledge the reality and urgency of climate change and to address the upcoming crisis it presents our communities. Our cities and towns are already coping with the impacts of climate change today. We will need leadership and concrete solutions from our next president. As a candidate for that office hailing from Florida, we ask you to meet with us to discuss the future of our communities in a warming climate.

We are already experiencing the effects of a changing climate. Sea levels off the coast of South Florida rose about eight inches in the twentieth century.¹ As a result, we have seen more tidal flooding, more severe storm surges, and more saltwater intrusion into aquifers. By 2050, mean sea level around Florida is expected to rise about a foot,² a shift which could wipe out as much as \$4 billion in taxable real estate in the four-county region of Southeast Florida.³ At three feet of sea level rise, the loss could total \$31 billion, with large sections of the Everglades, the Florida Keys and the Miami metropolitan region under water.⁴

Local governments are working to manage the present and future challenges of climate change. Many are collaborating at the regional level through the Southeast Florida Climate Compact. Locally, communities across the state are developing action plans, investing in stormwater pumps, upgrading stormwater and sewer systems, and revising building codes. However, these expensive measures to protect homes, businesses, and infrastructure will only serve as a temporary stopgap unless global warming emissions are substantially reduced.

Adapting to climate change at the local level is necessary, but it is not sufficient. We need a realistic national plan to slow global warming emissions and avoid the worst impacts of climate change. The science is well established: protecting the long-term future of our cities must include preventing global temperatures from rising above the internationally recognized target of two degrees celsius above pre-industrial levels. To get there, we need strong leadership from our next president to achieve national policies that reduce global warming emissions at home and global leadership to ensure other countries are doing their part. The U.S. should be at the forefront of the transition to clean energy, creating jobs for Americans while conserving our environment for future generations.

¹ "Mean Sea Level Trend 8724580 Key West, Florida," NOAA: *Tides and Currents*
http://tidesandcurrents.noaa.gov/sltrends/sltrends_station.shtml?stnid=8724580

² "Come Heat and High Water: Climate Risk in the Southeastern U.S. and Texas," Risky Business, July 2015
<http://riskybusiness.org/site/assets/uploads/2015/09/Climate-Risk-in-Southeast-and-Texas.pdf>

³ "Rising sea levels, falling real estate values," *Miami Herald*, 11-09-2015
<http://www.miamiherald.com/news/local/community/miami-dade/article1957294.html>

⁴ "A Region Responds to a Changing Climate: Southeast Florida Regional Climate Change Compact Counties Regional Climate Action Plan," Southeast Florida Regional Climate Change Compact, October 2012
<http://www.southeastfloridaclimatecompact.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/regional-climate-action-plan-final-ada-compliant.pdf>

Senator Rubio, as a U.S. Senator representing Florida and former Speaker of the Florida House of Representatives, you should know the risks ahead and articulate a plan for U.S. leadership on climate. Indeed, in 2006, you acknowledged the reality of climate change and promoted solutions including energy efficiency measures, tax incentives for renewable energy, and alternative fuels.⁵ You supported hybrid vehicles because they save money “while reducing emissions and helping to curb global warming.”⁶ However, you have since reversed course and claimed that you “don’t agree with the notion that some are putting out there, including scientists, that somehow, there are actions we can take today that would actually have an impact on what’s happening in our climate.”⁷ In a speech on our energy future this October, you dismissed efforts to develop renewable energy and called climate action “trying to change the weather.”⁸

Senator Rubio, ignoring climate science and doubling down on fossil fuels will only make the climate crisis more rapid and expensive. With the presidential election fast approaching, it is critical that your positions on these issues are well informed by the experience of our communities. Please meet with us to discuss the risks facing Florida communities due to climate change and help us chart a path forward to protect our state and the entire United States. We cordially request a meeting by Feb 29, 2016.

Sincerely,

Peggy Bell	Mayor, Town of Cutler Bay
Jim Cason	Mayor, City of Coral Gables
Joy Cooper	Mayor, City of Hallandale Beach
Daniel Dietch	Mayor, Town of Surfside
Eugene Flinn	Mayor, Village of Palmetto Bay
Connie Leon-Kreps	Mayor, North Bay Village
Cindy Lerner	Mayor, Village of Pinecrest
Mayra Peña Lindsay	Mayor, Village of Key Biscayne
Jeri Muoio	Mayor, City of West Palm Beach
Martin Packer	Mayor, Village of Bal Harbour
Tomas Regalado	Mayor, City of Miami
Gary Resnick	Mayor, City of Wilton Manors
Jack Seiler	Mayor, City of Fort Lauderdale
Glenn Singer	Mayor, Town of Golden Beach
Philip Stoddard	Mayor, City of South Miami

⁵ “How Rubio’s stance on energy, climate shifted from ‘friendly’ to conservative,” *E&E News*, 03-13-2015
<http://www.eenews.net/stories/1060014992>

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ “Sen. Marco Rubio: Yes, I’m ready to be president,” *ABC News*, 05-11-2014
<http://abcnews.go.com/blogs/politics/2014/05/sen-marco-rubio-yes-im-ready-to-be-president/>

⁸ “Marco Rubio’s energy policy centers on drilling and reversing Obama rules,” *New York Times*, 10-16-2015
http://www.nytimes.com/2015/10/17/us/politics/marco-rubios-energy-policy-centers-on-drilling-and-reversing-obama-rules.html?_r=0