



**CHARLOTTE**

**Testimony**

**Of**

**The Honorable Patrick L. McCrory  
Mayor,  
City of Charlotte, North Carolina**

**Before the**

**U.S. House of Representatives  
Subcommittee on Energy and Air  
Quality of the Committee on Energy  
and Commerce.**

**March 15, 2007**

Chairman Boucher and Members of the Subcommittee on Energy and Air Quality, I am pleased to be invited to speak before you this morning.

I am the Mayor of Charlotte, North Carolina, which is the 20<sup>th</sup> largest city in the country and is the headquarters city for eight Fortune 500 companies. I also serve as the Chairman of the U.S. Conference of Mayors Environment Committee

This past year, like so many baby boomers who have lost their parents, my brother, sisters, and I had the difficult job of cleaning out my parent's house, due to my mother's passing. While cleaning out a dresser drawer, I came upon a 1962 political brochure from my father's city council campaign in Worthington, Ohio. One quote in the brochure sticks with me today and I thought it was appropriate for your deliberations. It said, "We must walk the fine line between the growth and the preservation of values and the environment which brought many of us here. In this way, we can be certain that new families and desirable industry will continue to be attracted to Worthington."

For city Government officials during the last 45 years, whether in Worthington, Ohio or Charlotte, North Carolina, the goal of balance remains. As Mayor for the last twelve years of one of the most dynamic and fastest growing cities in the nation, I often return to my dad's words to initiate long-term economic and environmental policy. In doing so, I like many Mayors, have had to step on the toes of the fringe elements of both the left and the right who believe you cannot have both economic and environmental policy working in tandem.

Many on my political right criticize our efforts to implement mass transit, long-term land-use planning, and green building initiatives. To those on my right, I say they are wrong.

On the other hand, many on my political left fight to stop new zoning for manufacturing, Brownfield development liability waivers, and they won't implement, much less discuss, an energy policy that includes clean coal technology and nuclear energy. To those on my left, I say they are also wrong.

Eighty percent of Americans now live in cities. By 2050, that number will increase to 90 percent.<sup>1</sup> Cities worldwide presently account for 78% of all greenhouse gas emissions because that is where the people and cars are.<sup>2</sup> Between 2000 and 2015, the Charlotte-Mecklenburg population is estimated to increase by 44%, while Vehicles Miles Traveled in Charlotte-Mecklenburg is estimated to increase 80%.<sup>3</sup>

Like cities across the nation, Charlotte has been on the forefront of leading the environmental change across this country. Our efforts have been deliberate and have focused on all aspects of the environment including air, water, and land.

A few highlights of Charlotte's environmental efforts include:

- A residential tree ordinance that requires developers to save 10% of the tree canopy in any residential development project
- Enhancing our stream buffer guidelines to reduce water runoff pollution

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<sup>1</sup> Mayors for Climate Change website: [www.coolmayors.com](http://www.coolmayors.com)

<sup>2</sup> US Conference of Mayors website: [www.usmayors.org](http://www.usmayors.org)

<sup>3</sup> Charlotte Department of Transportation and NC State Data Center

- A sidewalk policy that requires residential and industrial areas to have sidewalks
- Increased bike lanes in city road projects to offer a travel alternative
- An expansion of the City's hybrid bus system and development of mass transit, to encourage people to get out of their cars and reduce emissions

As a designated non-attainment area, we have worked with the Environmental Protection Agency to create a regional approach to addressing air quality issues. Mayors and County Board Chairs have been working together in a unique, bi-state effort since 2000 to initiate common land-use and transit measures at the regional level to improve our overall air quality.

Further, another regional partnership between business and government, called *Clean Air Works!* has been implemented to work with employers to give employees more tools to take more control of the manner in which they commute to work. One of our largest employers now provides employees with a \$50 a month reimbursement to city bus or vanpool riders and another local employer introduced a new program that provides a \$3,000

reimbursement to employees purchasing a new hybrid vehicle. This is on top of the hybrid vehicle tax credit provided by the IRS.

The State of North Carolina has also been an active partner in air quality and environmental initiatives, including the historic Clean Smokestacks legislation of 2002. This act required major reductions in SO<sub>2</sub> and NO<sub>x</sub> emissions from North Carolina's 14 coal-fired power plants and it had the input and support of the State's major utility companies.

Efforts like the Clean Smokestacks legislation and the efforts we are taking at the local level show that business and government can work together and achieve significant results. The desire is to now see the same from our federal leaders.

My desire today is to impress upon you that reliable, reasonably priced, and environmentally sound energy helps to fuel our cities economy.

As I stated earlier, Charlotte is a high-growth city with a strong economy.

We continue to have strong job growth due in part to companies wanting to locate or expand their operations in North Carolina because of lower than

average electricity prices, a skilled workforce, and a great quality of life.

This is especially important since our region has been hurt by textile jobs moving out of the country.

North Carolina currently ranks 6<sup>th</sup> among 31 states with nuclear capacity and this is the key reason why we have lower than average electricity prices.

Nuclear energy is currently our nation's largest source of emissions-free electricity and must be a part of our nation's plan to address climate change.<sup>4</sup> In fact, only 20 miles outside of Charlotte there are four nuclear reactors in two separate areas. The Charlotte-region supports and understands the safety and necessity of this clean energy. In fact, multi-million dollar homes have been built within eyesight of these plants.

Another potential source of emissions-free electricity is renewable energy. In North Carolina, our generation mix currently includes 4.4% of hydroelectric power and 1.5% of other types of renewable power.<sup>5</sup> Costs per kilowatt for solar and wind technologies are improving, however, electricity

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<sup>4</sup> Nuclear Energy Institute website: [www.nei.org](http://www.nei.org)

<sup>5</sup> Energy Information Administration, State Electricity Profiles 2004

from solar and wind requires some duplication of generating capacity due to their intermittent nature.<sup>6</sup>

How the federal government seeks to address global climate change through policy and programs could greatly impact economic competitiveness.

North Carolinians still spend a substantial amount on energy. In 2000, they spent over \$19.3 billion, or 7% of the Gross State Product.

It is imperative that federal environmental policy is balanced and comprehensive – and is structured in a manner that will protect American citizens and businesses from sudden price shocks for energy and other goods. It must also continue policies that financially support mass transit and other efforts to provide our citizens a choice over the automobile.

Mayors across the country realize there is no quick fix to solve our environmental challenges. We have proven that leadership at the local and grassroots level can have a major positive impact on global and national pollution.

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<sup>6</sup> World Nuclear Association: Renewable Energy and Electricity

I do want to highlight that climate protection has been on the U.S. Mayor's radar dating back to 2005 when I chaired the passage of the U.S. Mayors Climate Protection Agreement through the Environment Committee and onto full adoption by the Conference. However, instead of spending time on debating the concept of global warming and climate change, as Mayor, I focus on the merits of clean air, clean water, and open space. In cities across the country, soccer moms and NASCAR dads clearly understand this environmental message, because it directly impacts their children today.

As a result of the growing emphasis on environmental issues, the Conference of Mayors has developed the 10-point plan for a Strong America and has made the Energy and Environmental Block Grant proposal the first effort in our 10-point plan. I hope you will read more about the Conference's Energy and Environmental Block Grant proposal, as it is modeled after the successful Community Development Block Grant program. This new block grant proposal gets at the heart of having a comprehensive environmental effort, whereby the federal government would partner with local governments, through funding grants, to implement community strategies to reduce carbon emissions and increase community

energy efficiency. In addition to supporting the Energy and Environmental Block Grant proposal, I also ask that this subcommittee evaluate how EPA guidelines can reward cities with air credits for implementing sound land-use and environmental policies.

In closing, I hope you too will also keep the words of my father in your minds as you work to address environmental issues and seek to find that “fine line between the growth and the preservation of values and the environment.” I also ask that you continue to call upon local and state leaders to develop a common sense approach to environmental and economic policy, as well as energy and transportation policies.

I am confident that Mayors will continue to work in the best interest of our communities by creating jobs for our citizens, while protecting our environment for future generations.

It was an honor to speak before you today and I appreciate the time you are taking to discuss this important issue.

Attachment:

**Testimony of Patrick L. McCrory  
Mayor, City of Charlotte, North Carolina  
Summary Page**

- Opening – Fathers Quote: “We walk the fine line between growth and the preservation of values and the environment.”
- The political fringe on the right and left are both wrong on environmental issues.
- The Charlotte-Mecklenburg population is estimated to increase 44%, while the vehicle miles traveled is estimated to increase 80%.
- List of local environmental initiatives undertaken in Charlotte.
- Charlotte-Mecklenburg is working regionally with elected officials and private businesses to address air quality and our non-attainment designation.
- State of North Carolina enacted the historic Clean Smokestacks legislation in 2002 to clean up SO<sub>2</sub> and NO<sub>X</sub> at 14 NC coal-fired power plants.
- North Carolina ranks 6<sup>th</sup> among 31 states with nuclear capacity, which helps to have lower than average electricity prices in NC.
- North Carolina has a mix of power sources, including nuclear energy. Nuclear energy is our nation’s largest source of emissions-free electricity.
- Federal government needs an environmental policy that is balanced and comprehensive – and coupled with energy and transportation policies.
- Mayors adopted the U.S. Mayors Climate Protection Agreement and are proposing an Energy and Environmental Block Grant initiative as part of the U.S. Mayors 10-point plan for a Strong America.
- Conclusion – Fathers quote -- Mayors will continue to work in the best interest of our communities.