

**Testimony of Mayor James Brainard
City of Carmel, Indiana**

**“Lessons from Across the Nation:
State and Local Action to Combat Climate Change”**

**House Committee on Energy & Commerce
Subcommittee on Environment & Climate change
Tuesday, April 2, 2019**

By Jim Brainard

Mr. Chairman and members of this subcommittee, thank you for this opportunity to testify before you today. I am Jim Brainard, Mayor of Carmel, Indiana.

Carmel is a city of about 100,000 people on the northern edge of Indianapolis that has gone through tremendous transformation during the past few decades.

Carmel consistently is ranked among the best places to live in the county, having been named the Best Place to Live in America by CNN Money magazine in 2012. Carmel recently was ranked #1 Best Suburb to Live in America by Niche.com, was listed as one of the Safest Cities in America by SafeWise and was named #1 Best Place to Launch a Career by Money Magazine last year.

We are successfully making our community safer and healthier for our residents, businesses and visitors through initiatives aimed at reducing pollution and harmful emissions.

I have also shared our initiatives and the importance of building a resilient city more broadly, speaking in India in 2015 as a part of the U.S. State Department Initiative on climate change and in Germany in 2015 as a part of the German American Institute discussing climate change mitigation and city management.

I have also shown my support here nationally as one of the original signers of the Conference of Mayors Climate Protection Agreement. Ultimately, more than 1,200 mayors from both parties throughout the U.S. signed onto the Agreement and pledged local efforts to help achieve greater reduction of harmful emissions. I have co-chaired the Conference of Mayors’ Energy Independence and Climate Protection Task Force. I also learned a great deal as one of few Republican members of President Obama’s Task Force on Climate Preparedness and Resilience. All of these have been experiences that have broadened my perspective and understanding of the issues we are facing. It is our job to find the best solutions that will yield the best successes.

More locally for me, farms just outside Carmel and throughout the state of Indiana have felt the impact of climate change. Purdue University’s Climate Change Research Center released a report last year detailing the negative impact today’s climate is having on agriculture including declining yields, a change in which crops will grow in the state, increased risk of heat stress to

livestock and decreased quality of soils in general. This could greatly impact food security for all of us.

I am often asked by younger Republicans and students why, as a Republican, I am strongly advocating for conservation and environmental initiatives. I remind them that the root of the word conservative is conserve and that many environmental initiatives have been implemented by Republicans.

It was President Teddy Roosevelt, a Republican, who preserved 230 million acres of wilderness and established five national parks. He created the U.S. Forest Service, elevating our nation's fledgling national forest management practices which were also started under Republican presidents in the late 1800s.

It was Richard Nixon, a Republican, who signed into law the National Environmental Policy Act; the Marine Mammal Protection Act; the Environmental Pesticide Control Act; and the Endangered Species Act – which, along with the banning of DDT, helped rescue the American Bald Eagle.

It was Indiana's own William Ruckelshaus, a Republican, who was the first head of the Environmental Protection Agency.

It was Ronald Reagan, a Republican, who enacted the Coastal Barrier Resources Act and the Water Resources Development Act. His approach to conservation efforts resulted in virtually eliminating lead production, reducing carbon monoxide emission by about a quarter and reducing particulate pollution 40 percent.

It was President George H. Bush, a Republican, who signed the Global Change Research Act of 1990, which requires that every four years an assessment of the findings be made and reported. The assessment is based on the most current peer-reviewed science evidence and its impact on our world.

I often tell our young Republicans that improving the environment doesn't have to take the form of regulations that may hurt businesses or our economy. We need to search for answers that help our environment while presenting opportunities to encourage thousands of new green jobs making products that save energy or make renewable energy. We should be researching and developing products and technologies that the citizens of this country and rest of the world are demanding.

Conservation of energy and improving our environment should have little to do with political persuasion. There is no democratic way or republican way to fill a chuck hole and there should not be a democratic way or republican way to be resilient. Liberals and conservatives should be interested in conservation and energy independence. This is not only an issue of cleaning up our air and water. It's a matter of quality of life. I have yet to meet the person who doesn't want clean air, clean water and an overall healthy environment, regardless of their political persuasion.

This is why I am here today, to report on how communities such as Carmel are working to become as resilient as possible while also dealing with the impact of poor air quality that hurts those with asthma and other pulmonary diseases or increasingly violent weather events that can negatively affect an entire community.

For our cities, this is about the need to address global warming's impact on our storm water, utility systems and other city services including our emergency response in the event of tornadoes, hurricanes and other natural disasters. It's about developing better building codes and switching to LED street lighting.

Some of the things we have done in Carmel are:

- Replaced traditional signalized intersections with roundabouts. Carmel now has 122 roundabouts, more than any other U.S. city – Roundabouts reduce injury accidents 80 percent, reduce fuel use and harmful emissions as the start and stop movement of traffic is all but eliminated. It is estimated that replacing stop-light intersections with 122 roundabouts saves drivers in our community about 272 tanker trucks of fuel per year, which translates into a reduction of carbon emissions by approximately 27,816 tons annually.
- We are using city design principles to build a more walkable city, which improves our community's quality of life through the health benefits of more exercise as well as the reduction of harmful emissions.
- We installed more than 200 miles of trails and paths that allow people to safely walk or bicycle to their destinations to further reduce emissions.
- Since 2005, I have required that alternative fuel vehicles are purchased by city departments when available. This month, our police department began switching its entire fleet of patrol cars from gasoline-powered vehicles to hybrids - a move that will save the City of Carmel about \$400,000 once the entire 130-car fleet is replaced.
- Carmel has tested a hydrogen powered pickup truck and this year outfitted it with a snow plow, which worked well this winter. Hydrogen vehicles operate without any harmful emissions. Only a small amount of water drains from the tailpipe.
- Carmel's wastewater plant incorporates the biopasture system, which turns waste into fertilizer.
- The city re-uses the methane gas that is a natural byproduct of the wastewater treatment process to heat the boilers used in the biosolids process as well as heat a maintenance building thereby reducing their energy consumption.
- The city has replaced almost all of its street lights with LEDs and has seen a 48 percent reduction in energy consumption to power those lights.

These are just a few of the four-page list of green initiatives that we have implemented in the city of Carmel. You can see that we are doing our part, but we could achieve greater results more quickly with your help.

Local governments retain a very small share of the taxes we generate. For each tax dollar raised, less than 15 cents is retained locally. We must make that small percentage stretch

among many services, such as public safety, drainage and flood control, parks and recreation, water and wastewater along with storm water management and other services.

We are asking for you to help by investing in local governments. We saw this work successfully first-hand when this Committee and ultimately Congress invested in local governments by providing funds to the Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant Program (EECBG) as part of the stimulus during the Great Recession. I mentioned our switch to LED lights earlier and I want to point out that we used federal funds to help with this initiative, which continues to help us reduce energy consumption and save our taxpayers money through reduced electricity costs.

This program is patterned after the revenue sharing Community Development Block Grants (CDBG) created under the Nixon administration. Similarly, they acknowledged that local governments knew best how to decide where the money should be used most effectively. The United States is a big country and the needs of cities differ vastly from place to place. All cities need to become more energy efficient and resilient to inclement weather. What each city needs to fulfill those goals is very different. That is why the Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant Program (EECBG) works so well. Each city can apply those funds where they do the most good.

I ask on behalf of our community that you fund the EECGB at a high level. The mayors of this country will not let you down. We will use those funds wisely for our communities.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today.