

# **Testimony of Governor Jay Inslee**

**Governor, State of Washington**

**Before the House Subcommittee on Environment & Climate Change**

**U.S. House of Representatives**

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

**April 2, 2019**

Chairman Pallone, Chairman Tonko, Ranking Member Walden, Ranking Member Shimkus, members of the subcommittee, thank you for inviting me here today.

I am here to tell you unequivocally that there are more jobs in fighting climate change than denying it. It’s time for the federal government to stop denying climate change and start embracing the clean energy jobs that come with bold, national climate action. Our country should seize this opportunity and tackle the most pressing and existential threat of our time.

We are the first generation to feel the sting of climate change and the last generation who can do something about it. This is a matter of urgency.

I’m eager to share with you what we’re doing at the state level now, and what we as a nation need to do next.

This is an issue I’ve been working on for decades. Less than ten years ago, I sat where you are now, as a congressman serving on the House Energy and Commerce Committee.

This chamber is where I worked with my colleagues to enact the largest single investment in clean energy in American history, as part of the 2009 Recovery Act, deploying renewable energy, cleaner cars, innovative technologies and good-paying jobs.

Today, I sit before you as a governor who remains bullish about America’s ability to build a clean energy economy. We are the most innovative and can-do people in the history of humanity. We are growing clean energy jobs by the bucketful, in communities urban, suburban and rural, and it’s imperative that we take action to ensure they keep growing here in America — not in China or Germany.

Climate change presents great peril, but it also presents great promise. When I co-authored a book, *Apollo's Fire*, I wrote about how we as a nation are uniquely positioned to invent, create and build the equitable clean energy economy that is key to defeating climate change. Having seen the incredible innovation happening all across my state and all across the country, I'm more convinced of our ability to transform our economy than ever before.

I'm proud of all we've done to advance the clean energy revolution in my state, along the West Coast, and in other leading states around the country. But the truth remains that without leadership from our federal government, the country won't be able to do enough, fast enough.

### **World in Crisis**

Our forests are burning, our cities are flooding, and we're running out of time.

Last fall, the federal government released the Fourth National Climate Assessment, a comprehensive report completed every four years by our top scientists among 11 federal agencies. This report exhaustively catalogues the havoc that climate change will wreak — and is already wreaking — across the country.

For the first time, this report put a clock on how long we have to act. If current emission rates continue, in 10 years we won't be able to limit global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius, with nearly unthinkable consequences.

This isn't an abstract number.

2017 saw numerous catastrophic fires, Hurricane Maria, and massive flooding. All told, these events cost the United States more than \$306 billion, making 2017 the most expensive natural disaster year in U.S. history.

2018 brought us Hurricane Michael, one of Florida's worst hurricanes to date, and the Camp Fire in California, the state's deadliest ever.

I've been to Paradise, California, and let me tell you, it is impossible to describe the devastation that community has faced. Walking through that town looks post-apocalyptic, with virtually every structure abandoned or destroyed and more than 25,000 people missing from their homes. How can anyone look at what happened there and ignore the clear and present danger staring us in the face?

## **In Washington State**

We're seeing the devastation wrought by climate change firsthand in my state. And we know that a world surging past 1.5 degrees Celsius is a world where these disasters become the new normal.

In the West, that means hot summers and dry forests, which means fire, air pollution and risk to life and property at scales we've never experienced. In my time as governor, Washington State has experienced its two largest fire seasons ever and the hottest years on record.

Just last month we had the warmest winter day in state history. But that's not unusual anymore, because every year we see a new record set.

Last year, thanks to wildfire smoke, my state had the dubious distinction of suffering from the worst air quality in the world — not China, not India, but Washington State. My own grandchildren couldn't go outside, couldn't play, couldn't go swimming because the air quality was that bad.

A few years ago we experienced a record drought season that resulted in the loss of 250,000 returning sockeye salmon due to lower, warmer streams and \$733 million in lost crops.

And it's not just the people in my state suffering these impacts. The people of your states are seeing the damage from more extreme weather events, crop losses and unhealthy air quality.

## **Public Opinion is Shifting**

More and more Americans are waking up to this disturbing reality, and the federal government is again falling behind public opinion.

The vast majority of Americans now understand that climate change is happening, outnumbering those who don't by more than 5 to 1. And their certainty of this fact has increased by 14 percent in the last few years.

Today, 72 percent of people in this country — more than 7 in 10 Americans — now say the issue of climate change is important to them personally.

Public opinion is shifting fast, the countdown to 1.5 degrees is bearing down on us, and the federal government needs to keep pace.

## States are Leading

Despite this administration's failure to keep that pace, states are leading the charge to build strong, low-carbon economies — cutting pollution, lowering consumer costs and creating jobs, all at the same time.

Washington State is an example of how leading on clean energy goes hand in hand with leading a strong economy. Through policies to promote renewable energy, invest in research and development of clean tech, electrification of our transportation sector and more, we're taking bold action on climate while our economy continues to thrive.

We have been named the best state to do business and the best state in the nation for workers. And that's what an all-out fight against climate change is going to look like — an investment in innovation and the fundamentals of our economy, and in workers and the high-quality jobs they need.

This year, we're pursuing one of our most ambitious efforts yet. Our state Senate passed legislation that will spur a transformation in our electricity system over the next decade. The bill phases out coal-fired power by 2025, significantly increases the amount of renewable energy resources like solar and wind that utilities must acquire by 2030, and puts Washington on a pathway to 100 percent clean electricity by 2045.

The bill is part of package of legislation that I've proposed to leap further and faster into the clean energy economy. It includes:

- A phase down of super-polluting hydrofluorocarbons, or HFCs;
- An innovative incentive package for ultra-efficient 21st century buildings;
- An acceleration of the deployment of electric vehicles on our roads and electrification of passenger ferries;
- New investments in efficiency; and
- The use of cleaner transportation fuels.

That's just this year. But we've been at this a while. In Washington, a state with the nation's largest supply of cheap hydropower, we've become a leader in commercial scale wind thanks to policies we adopted in 2006.

In the last decade, utilities and commercial power providers have built 3,000 megawatts of new wind power and invested almost \$6 billion. And the Clean

Energy Fund I established in 2013 has managed \$125 million of investments in clean energy innovation.

Our work at the state level — and an extraordinary amount of industry innovation — has put us on track to meet my goal of 50,000 electric cars on our roads by the end of this year, making Washington one of the nation's top clean car states. Meanwhile, our economy is one of the strongest in the nation, with the highest real GDP growth of any state in 2017.

Washington is just one of the states doing important work to advance clean energy and transportation.

As the Trump administration announced its retreat from the Paris Agreement, I worked with Jerry Brown of California and Andrew Cuomo of New York to establish the U.S. Climate Alliance, a bipartisan coalition of 23 governors committed to reducing greenhouse gas emissions consistent with the goals of the Paris Agreement.

The Climate Alliance now includes over half of the U.S. population and nearly 60 percent of our economy — \$11 trillion annually. That's the equivalent of the third-largest economy in the world, after the United States and China.

Climate Alliance states have reduced emissions faster than the rest of the country, while growing our economies faster than the rest of the country. This shows that fighting climate change and growing strong economies happen hand in hand. And our states are continuing to step up our efforts.

Colorado Governor Jared Polis signed an order that accelerates widespread electrification of cars, buses, trucks and other vehicles.

New Jersey, Delaware, Virginia and other states are building a low-carbon transportation initiative modeled on the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative that successfully cut emissions in the power sector.

New Mexico just voted to double renewable energy use in the state by 2025, and became the third state, after Hawaii and California, to commit to generating 100 percent of its electricity from carbon-free resources by 2045.

Illinois passed the Future Energy Jobs Act, expanding solar energy and setting a 25 percent renewable energy goal for the state.

Massachusetts, Maryland and Vermont have all taken decisive action in their states to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and increase deployment of renewable energy.

### **Federal Action is Essential**

Unfortunately, at the federal level, this administration isn't just failing to act — they are lighting the match and setting the fire. Look where they're taking us:

- Rolling back the Clean Power Plan that was poised to transition our grid into the 21st century;
- Attacking fuel economy and clean car standards that have saved lives and lowered consumer costs;
- Gutting modest standards that would have lowered methane leaks in the oil and gas industry; and
- Releasing illegal rules to bring back inefficient equipment and appliances that cost consumers money.

Just a few weeks ago, this White House released a budget that:

- Cuts the Renewable Energy Office by a staggering 86 percent, a more than a \$2 billion reduction;
- Cuts sustainable transportation by 77 percent, a more than \$530 million reduction;
- Cuts solar energy by 72 percent, a \$180 million reduction; and
- Cuts wind energy by 74 percent, a \$68 million reduction.

It's more than just disappointing. It is irresponsible — for the climate, for the economy, and for future generations. We need an administration that believes in the science of both gravity and climate change.

The clean energy economy is growing twice as fast as the rest of our economy, and solar panel installers and wind turbine technicians are two of the fastest growing jobs in the nation.

Don't tell me fighting climate change is an economic loser. Fighting climate change is our economic future, but only if we don't cede leadership to China, Germany and every other country going all-in on this effort.

Don't tell me fighting climate change is just an environmental issue. It is key to our national security, as described by this administration's own military leaders.

It is key to the health and future of our children and grandchildren.

### **Why the Federal Government Must Get Back in the Game**

States cannot solve a problem of this magnitude on our own. It's that simple.

It's long past time for Congress to put our nation back in the game. While states and cities are doing our part, the scale of action needed to beat the clock requires a national mobilization of resources and policies to drive innovation across every sector of our economy.

Fortunately, we aren't starting from scratch. That innovation is already underway. But we need more, and we need it fast. It's up to you to leverage our national resources and unleash our researchers, scientists, machinists, manufacturers, growers and laborers to do what they do best – create, invent and build the way to an equitable new clean energy future.

Thank you again for the opportunity to appear before you today, and I look forward to your questions.