

Mayors Seek \$4 Billion Grant to Fight Global Warming

WASHINGTON, DC, January 26, 2007 (ENS) - More than 260 of the nation's mayors wrapped up the 75th Winter Meeting of the U.S. Conference of Mayors today with a call for a \$4 billion Energy and Environmental Block Grant to help cities combat global warming by increasing community energy efficiency.

"Cities are on the frontlines of the global warming issue with mayors leading the way. But we can't do it alone. We need the federal government to be a real partner with us on climate protection and achieving energy independence. That is why we are proposing an Energy and Environmental Block Grant," said Conference President and Trenton, New Jersey Mayor Douglas Palmer.

The block grant would provide funding directly to cities and urban counties for programs that improve community energy efficiency, reduce carbon emissions, and decrease the nation's dependence on foreign oil.

The request for an Energy and Environmental Block Grant followed a special session on climate protection led by Seattle Mayor Greg Nickels and Carmel, Indiana Mayor James Brainard.

Democratic Senators Barbara Boxer of California and Edward Markey of Massachusetts participated in the Climate Protection session together with Oscar-nominated producer of the global warming documentary "An Inconvenient Truth," Lawrence Bender.

Speaking at a news conference Mayor Nickels announced the Mayors Climate Campaign 2007, which will press the 110th Congress establish a national cap on greenhouse gas emissions and a flexible market-based system of tradable allowances for emitting industries; and pass climate-friendly energy and transportation policies.

"Change is in the air and the time to act is now," said Nickels. "In Seattle, where our electric utility is carbon neutral, we are showing that you can power a city without toasting a planet. Now we need our leaders in Washington to step up to the aggressive but achievable goal of cutting emissions 80 percent nationwide by 2050."

Nickels and nine other mayors started the U.S. Mayors Climate Protection Agreement in February 2005. To date, 376 mayors from all 50 states plus the District of Columbia, representing more than 56.4 million Americans, have signed the pledge to take action to cut local emissions in line with the Kyoto Protocol and to press Congress for leadership.

The agreement has been unanimously endorsed by the U.S. Conference of Mayors.

In a show of support, hundreds of mayors joined today's announcement, many of them sporting green "I Signed It" buttons, reflecting their pledges to cut emissions and address the threat of climate change.

Cities are taking action. Seattle's city owned electric utility, Seattle City Light, is the first power company in the nation to achieve net-zero greenhouse gas emissions. It has done this through conservation, using renewable power sources and investing in mostly local carbon-offset programs.

Carmel, Indiana Mayor Brainard is promoting fuel efficiency, hydrogen cars, and extensive tree plantings.

For more information on the U.S. Mayors Climate Protection Agreement, go to: www.seattle.gov/mayor/climate.

The U.S. Conference of Mayors is the official nonpartisan organization of cities with populations of 30,000 or more. There are 1,139 such cities in the country.