

Dear Congressional Leaders,

We are at a pivotal moment in our nation's history. We began the year committed to protecting human civilization and beating the ten-year clock counting down to massive, irreparable climate disruption. Three months in, an unimaginable public health crisis of COVID-19 has been accompanied by a profound economic crisis, all while laying bare a deep crisis of racial inequity that's burst onto our streets in recent weeks. As mayors and local leaders, we stand on the front lines of this moment — and we are determined to meet it with strength, resilience, resolve, and bold action to protect our planet and build a more just future for all Americans.

So far, Congress has passed important legislation to respond to the pandemic, invest in our small businesses, support working families, and increase our testing capacity. But these bills, while critical, remain incomplete. Our nation and our cities need our representatives in Washington D.C. to move forward with a bold and innovative recovery package that takes direct, strategic steps to lift up our most vulnerable residents and communities.

We need that kind of approach to continue managing the fallout from COVID-19 — much the same way we focus on equity and fairness in our work to tackle the climate crisis.

Climate Mayors — a bipartisan network of almost 450 U.S. mayors — is playing a leading role to preserve our environment, create good-paying green jobs, invest in clean air, clean water, and clean energy, and uphold the objectives of the Paris Agreement at the local level. This commitment remains steadfast even in these times of turbulence and turmoil, and we will continue to prioritize policies and programs that help build for a better, more sustainable tomorrow.

As elected officials weigh the responses that incentivize a just, equitable, and sustainable economic recovery from this crisis, leaders in Congress should look no further than the proposal from Climate Mayors attached to this letter. We lay out the core building blocks of a healthy, dynamic, fair economy founded on a level playing field — emphasizing innovation and infrastructure, lower energy costs, greater access to clean energy, and increased investment in public transit. We possess one of the greatest opportunities for economic growth and the reduction of greenhouse gases our generation has ever seen — and we have to seize it.^[1]

Cities across America have long demonstrated that economic growth and environmental stewardship go hand in hand — and now, our federal government can show the world that investments in a zero-carbon economy are an investment in the future of our workforce, the well-being of coming generations, and the resilience of our infrastructure and public spaces.^[2]

This sort of generational change will not come overnight. Climate Mayors looks forward to continuing to engage with Congressional leadership as plans emerge for a fuller recovery. As this legislative process evolves, we encourage you to keep these goals in mind:

1. Building Back Better: Returning to the status quo is not sufficient in meeting the challenges of climate change and inequities in our communities. We must do better.
2. Leading with Equity: Federal investments in our municipalities must prioritize those communities who have been left behind, and frontline communities and people of color who have been disproportionately impacted by the effects of climate change and COVID-19.
3. Prioritizing Multiple Benefits: The best investments will create jobs, strengthen communities, and improve health outcomes in our cities and towns.

Cities throughout the United States are under tremendous pressure.^[3] In the face of our immediate crises — as well as the omnipresent threat of climate change — we encourage Congress to look to our local governments and communities to find meaningful solutions to these shared challenges. If fully funded, effectively implemented, and flexible enough to adapt locally, the policies highlighted attached will have a lasting impact on our ability to meet the scope and scale of the challenges before us.

Thank you for your consideration of these proposals. We look forward to working with you to build a better future behind a clear vision for protecting the environment and making our economy work for everyone.

Respectfully,

[1] [America's Pledge, "Accelerating America's Pledge." December 2019.](#)

[2] [BW Research Partnership, May 2020. "Clean Energy Employment Initial Impacts from the COVID-19 Economic Crisis, April 2020."](#)

[3] [National League of Cities and United States Conference of Mayors. April 2020. "The Economy and Cities: What America's Local Leaders Are Seeing."](#)

Appendix I - Programs and Policies for Federal Stimulus Packages

This document captures a list of policies and programs that will greatly aid in a just, equitable and resilient economic recovery that will put Americans back to work and create cleaner, healthier, more livable communities. It is not an exhaustive list; it is meant to consist of policy recommendations that have bipartisan support and can be implemented on a short time horizon. These policies and programs fall into four general categories:

1. Reduce energy costs for small businesses and low-income families:

- Policy Recommendation: Reauthorize and fully fund the Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant (EECBG) program in FY2021 and beyond.
 - Value to Cities: Enabled cities to invest in programs and technologies that reduced energy costs and increased sustainability. With some modifications such as increasing support for community-prioritized project planning, expanding the definition of eligible projects, adjusting the funding model to allow for more equitable distribution, and reducing the administrative burden associated with grants, EECBG would more efficiently create jobs, drive down energy costs for consumers, build healthy infrastructure, and reduce carbon emissions.
 - Success Story: Fremont, CA linked the EECBG funds into its existing Climate Action Plan to reduce the city's greenhouse gas emissions by 25% from the 2005 levels and to reduce energy consumption in non-city buildings by 25% from the 2005 levels.
- Policy Recommendation: Significantly increase funding for the Weatherization Assistance Program (WAP).
 - Value to Cities: A recent report by the Department of Energy (DOE) noted that for every \$1 invested in weatherization yields over \$4 in energy and non-energy benefits.¹ Weatherization is going to be an especially important issue now during extreme heat season.
 - Success Story: Denver Housing Authority renovated 12 of its affordable housing buildings resulting in savings of 2,200 MWh of electricity, 194,000 therms of natural gas, and 20 million gallons of water.²
- Policy Recommendation: Increase funding for the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) to ensure households can pay for their heating and cooling needs, as well as make needed energy efficiency investments.

¹ US Department of Energy, Office of Energy Efficiency & Renewable Energy, "Weatherization Works." June 2019

² <https://www.denvergov.org/content/dam/denvergov/Portals/771/documents/EQ/CEP/Denver-Housing-Authority-Case-Study.pdf>

- Value to Cities: Low-income families are under increasing pressure in the current economy. Programs like LIHEAP provide much needed support and will be all the more important as we enter the summer months.
- Success Story: Over 5 million households across the country receive LIHEAP benefits, and that number is growing in the midst of the current crisis. And cities like Louisville are extending application deadlines to ensure residents are able to take full advantage of the program.

2. Job Creation and Improved Public Safety through Investment in innovation and infrastructure

- Policy Recommendation: Expand the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program to permit investments in climate resilient infrastructure, especially in low- and moderate-income neighborhoods.
 - Value to Cities: As extreme weather events become more frequent and intense, programs like CDBG will serve as essential tools for cities to withstand and recover from these climate-driven impacts.
 - Success Story: Cities like Minot, ND have received funding through the National Disaster Resilience Competition (NDRC) to support its integrated approach to addressing climate change and recent upstream development that has increased the risk of frequent flooding. The City plans to reduce flood risk and improve water management, build affordable and resilient neighborhoods connected to transit and job centers, and foster economic resilience through the creation of Centers for Technical Education.
- Policy Recommendation: Fully implement and fund provisions of the Disaster Recovery and Reform Act (DRRA), including the Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities (BRIC) program.
 - Value to Cities: Every \$1 spent on hazard mitigation can save the nation \$6 in future disaster costs.³
 - Success Story: After Hurricane Harvey, Houston increased building code regulations to require that all new and redeveloped structures be elevated higher than required by the previous code. As a result, each newly developed or redeveloped home has the potential to save upward of \$50,000 in rebuilding costs from potential future flooding.
- Policy Recommendation: Facilitate greater public and private sector investment in the rapid transition to a zero-carbon economy by creating an infrastructure bank/infrastructure bonds that prioritize projects that meet specific climate, resilience, and equity criteria;

³ <https://www.nibs.org/news/381874/National-Institute-of-Building-Sciences-Issues-New-Report-on-the-Value-of-Mitigation.htm>

- Value to Cities: Even in the best of times, cities face tight budget environments. Expanding financing options will enable cities to make much needed investments in existing and new infrastructure.
- Success Story: While cities have not established their own infrastructure banks, several states, including Connecticut, have deployed successful models, and Montgomery County, MD has a Green Bank that provides affordable financing for clean energy and energy efficiency for commercial, nonprofit, multi-family, and industrial property owners. 20% of funds are directed to low-/medium-income communities.
- Policy Recommendations: Invest in recycling infrastructure.
 - Value to Cities: Supports local job creation and workforce development, and reduces costs burdens for cities carrying a significant increase in additional waste management costs
 - Success Story: Cities like San Jose, CA have set ambitious targets for reducing waste and increasing reuse and recycling, nearly doubling the city's commercial recycling rate.
- Policy Recommendation: Build and expand upon local workforce training programs geared toward clean technology.
 - Value to Cities: Programs tailored to different sectors and geographies, and designed in collaboration with local jurisdictions, unions, community-based organizations, and other relevant industry stakeholders can ensure a newly trained workforce meets the needs of the local economy.
 - Success Stories: Detroiters Working for Environmental Justice – the oldest environmental justice organization in Michigan – runs the Future Build program that provides training in solar installation, residential and commercial construction, and lead abatement.

3. Advance zero emissions technologies and policies

- Policy Recommendation: Significantly increase the funding for clean, sustainable transit programs to meet the needs of essential workers and offset significant budget shortfalls.⁴
 - Value to Cities: Public transit is under extraordinary pressure in the current environment. Notably, transit ensures that 30% of essential workers get to their jobs. Mobility investments are most effective when they take a systems-based approach, are designed with multiple stakeholders, and include a range of solutions such as shared mobility, micro-mobility, transportation demand management, active transportation, transit-oriented development, and prioritize low-income and communities of color who are impacted first and worst by fossil fuel pollution and climate change.

⁴ Transportation for America, “Learning From the 2009 Recovery Act.” April 2020.

- Success Story: Minneapolis-Saint Paul have been particularly focused on this type of holistic approach, launching a series of mobility hubs with an emphasis on equity.⁵
- Policy Recommendation: Expand tax credits and other policies that support increased manufacturing and wider adoption of electric vehicles (EVs), EV transit buses and school buses, and investment in EV infrastructure.
 - Value to Cities: Cities want to be aggressive in reducing emissions and decreasing pollution and related health problems from the transportation sector. This is increasingly urgent now as research from Harvard University has shown that pollution is linked to increased risk of COVID-19 fatalities.⁶
 - Success Stories: Cities across the country have been ramping up their efforts to transition to electric⁷, including those like Charlotte, NC and Austin, TX who have been steadily increasing the number of EVs in their municipal fleets through their participation in the Climate Mayors EV Purchasing Collaborative, as well as cities like Chula Vista, CA, Binghamton, NY, Cincinnati, OH and Winter Park, FL who have committed to transitioning their municipal fleets to electric and have taken meaningful steps to doing so.⁸

4. Expand clean energy and grid modernization

- Policy Recommendation: Extend and expand tax policies, and other measures – such as Section 1603 of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) – in support of wind, solar, energy storage, and carbon capture utilization and storage (CCUS).
 - Value to Cities: These mechanisms can be leveraged by organizations, entities, and individuals without access to tax equity and would enable cities to pursue ambitious targets.
 - Success Stories: Cities throughout the country, including Blacksburg, VA, Boise, ID, Cincinnati, OH, Columbia, SC, Fayetteville, AR, are taking concrete steps to accelerate the transition to clean energy and have committed to achieving 100% renewable energy goals.
- Policy Recommendation: Support policies and programs that incentivize reforestation, carbon drawdown, and sequestration.
 - Value to Cities: A full suite of solutions are necessary to address the scale of the climate crisis. Urban forestry projects are important climate mitigation and adaptation strategies, reducing the urban heat island effect and energy demand for cooling.

⁵ <https://sharedusemobilitycenter.org/mobility-hubs-in-twin-cities/>

⁶ <https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/news/hsph-in-the-news/air-pollution-linked-with-higher-covid-19-death-rates/>

⁷ <https://driveevfleets.org/what-is-the-collaborative/>

⁸ <https://driveevfleets.org/media/>

- Success Stories: The District of Columbia's Urban Tree Canopy Plan set a goal of covering 40% of the District with a healthy tree canopy by 2032. The District estimates that its existing tree canopy currently stores 474,000 metric tons of carbon each year and captures an additional 14,600 metric tons per year.
- Policy Recommendation: Invest in grid modernization needed to support a zero-carbon economy – including massive expansion of broadband networks to bridge the digital divide.
 - Value to Cities: Doing so would spur technology innovation, job creation and microgrid deployment, and would save customers money in routine times while providing for greater resilience in times of crisis.
 - Success Stories: Programs like “Smart Columbus” have prioritized investments in grid modernization to enable increased energy efficiency, renewable energy deployment and investment in EVs and EV infrastructure.