

WE ARE STILL IN AMERICA'S PLEDGE

We Are Still In and America's Pledge: How non-Party actors in the United States are working towards the U.S. nationally determined contribution and upholding the Paris Agreement

Where are we?

The next few years of global climate action are crucial. Limiting warming to well below 2°C will require accelerating the pace of decarbonization. Incremental action, as experienced to date, won't be enough. Rapid, transformational change is imperative.

Actors in the real economy and broad society—cities, states, businesses, universities, faith groups, indigenous people, and cultural institutions—will play a crucial role in this transformation, because actual decarbonization largely occurs from the bottom up. These institutions are now leading by increasing their own efforts, working together to go even further, and showcasing their efforts to the rest of the world to inspire similar change.

In the United States, bottom-up actions are now uniquely paramount. On June 1, 2017, the president of the United States announced that the Federal Government would be withdrawing from the Paris Agreement in 2020, unless suitable terms for re-engagement are agreed.

The pending withdrawal by the United States from the Paris Agreement could have put the world even farther off track from its global goals by 2020, but are not, because a new form of American climate leadership is taking hold.

On June 5, just days after the announcement by the president, thousands of subnational leaders across the United States banded together to announce "We Are Still In." The unprecedented We Are Still In coalition is now made up of more than 2,600 U.S. subnational actors from all 50 states committed to climate action. We Are Still In represents 130 million Americans from across all 50 states and accounts for \$6.2 trillion—over half of US GDP—brought under one banner to tackle climate change. These leaders are in a unique position to drive change at a local, regional, and state level to achieve the transformation that is needed to meet the climate crisis. If they were a nation, they would be the world's third largest by economic clout.

These actors are accelerating U.S. climate progress. Despite headwinds from the federal government, the American economy continues to move towards the Paris Agreement's goal-posts. Emissions in 2017 fell by more than 2% while the economy grew 2.3%. And the U.S. is already halfway to its 2025 NDC

target. The number of coal plants retired this year will be far higher than the recent average; new states are signing up for climate action and carbon pricing; wind energy continues to pass coal as the dominant generation source in many states, across the political spectrum. Corporations are committing themselves to science based decarbonization targets through the Science Based Targets Initiative.

These real economy stakeholders will—and must—fill the ambition gap by working collaboratively across sectors and through local networks. They are powerful alone. Networked and linked they can drive even greater change across the economy. That's why America's Pledge was organized—to help understand the impact of climate action from all these elements of the American economy, to measure the impact of bottom up commitments and leadership, and to assess how we can increase ambition further to enable a long-term emissions pathway consistent with the goals of the Paris Agreement.

The United States is already witnessing an increasing number of record-breaking, climate-related disasters, costing billions of dollars every year and threatening our communities. Sea level rise to date added billions to the cost of storm surge during Hurricane Sandy. According to the best scientific estimates, climate change dramatically amplified the rainfall and flooding during Hurricane Harvey, an event that totaled well over \$100 billion in damages.

Why is bottom up climate action so robust and dynamic? Why are many of America's biggest renewable energy states led by climate denial Governors? Quite simply because decarbonization pays. Shifting from dirty to clean energy protects public health and communities. The clean energy transition also creates jobs, fuels the economy and drives down emissions. As consumers demand access to cleaner energy and cleaner air, renewable technology prices are falling everywhere. Deployment of cost-competitive clean energy and energy efficiency solutions has both economic and climate benefits.

Taking action on climate change now safeguards cities, the American people, and businesses. Science and economics show that it is possible to limit warming to well below 2°C if countries immediately strengthen their commitments. Real economy innovations are providing the foundations to do so, not only in the United States, but globally.

Where do we want to go?

Ever intensifying climate leadership is being demonstrated by real economy actors, rather than at the federal level, in the United States. This action must be informed by the best available science and the goals of the Paris Agreement. By signing We Are Still In, real economy leaders from sectors across the United States are expressing their willingness to 1) bring their emissions in line with a well below 2°C trajectory, and 2) to

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support the Paris Agreement and work constructively with the rest of the world to meet the climate crisis.

By connecting real economy actors across all fifty states and from sectors ranging from large corporations to small cities from college campuses to churches, We Are Still In is constructing a network capable of unleashing more ambitious bottom up climate action. This foundation of nationwide, multi-sector support can restore and accelerate national climate action in the United States and remove barriers to meeting the existing U.S. nationally determined contribution. And while We Are Still In strengthens and empowers this network, America's Pledge establishes a vision and analytical approach and catalyzes strategic collaborative engagements to position the United States on track to rapid, long-term decarbonization.

How do we get there?

Actors across the United States are eager to lead by accelerating their efforts to address climate change. And these actors have mobilized, with networks emerging to drive more effective communication and coordination, including the U.S. Climate Alliance (focused on mobilizing U.S. states) and Climate Mayors (focused on U.S. cities).

We Are Still In signatories will be encouraged to step up and increase their climate ambition in 2018. Specifically, We Are Still In signatories will be invited to make a "U.S. Climate Action Contribution". A U.S. Climate Action Contribution is a tool for U.S. subnational actors to commit to new climate actions, enhance existing actions, connect with the most up-to-date resources, and communicate their existing climate efforts to receive recognition. Regardless of the size, location or purpose of an organization, its "contribution" reflects its part of the global effort to step up the fight against climate change. These Contributions will not only make progress towards the U.S. NDC, but also increase how steeply the U.S. can cut emissions and lay the foundation for achieving much more ambitious 2030 and 2050 emissions targets.

As We Are Still In invites signatories to assess and evaluate their own climate commitments, America's Pledge is helping assess their potential impact and providing a template to help catalyze more ambitious action across corporations, cities, and states. As part of this effort, America's Pledge assessed the footprint of actions in advance of COP23 in 2017, and is now assessing the impact of subnational efforts, the pathway between where we are and where we need to be, and potential opportunities for action in 2025 and beyond. America's Pledge will link the opportunities discussed in the report to action and commitments that can be initiated at the Global Climate Action Summit in California and developed for the UN Secretary General's climate summit in 2019.

In the United States, we understand that we still have a significant gap to close -- but we have just started.

Where we end up in 2025 and beyond depends on what we do over the next eight years—including the continued and increasing impact of non-Federal actors combined with the impact of coming elections. Only two years into this ten-year process, cities and states representing more than half the US economy have advanced action toward the Paris goals, businesses are stepping up, and we have reason to be confident that this approach can and will deliver even more to enable us to stay on track toward long-term decarbonization.

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