

**JEWISH COUNCIL FOR PUBLIC AFFAIRS**  
**DRAFT RESOLUTION ON RENEWING OUR COMMITMENT TO**  
**COMBATING CLIMATE CHANGE**

Sponsored by Jewish Community Relations Council of Silicon Valley, Jewish  
Community Relations Council of Portland, Jewish Community Relations Council  
of Greater Boston, Jewish Community Relations Council of Greater Rochester,  
Union for Reform Judaism, and Rabbinical Assembly

**Summary:** This resolution builds on JCPA's existing [2016 Resolution on Climate Change](#), [2008 Resolution on Climate Change and Poverty](#), [1997 Resolution on Confronting the Challenge of Climate Change](#), this resolution lifts up the urgency of the climate change crisis and calls on Jewish communities to take action.

1 The Jewish Council for Public Affairs has been a strong advocate for combating  
2 climate change, which is one of the greatest threats we face. A 2019 United  
3 Nations report warns of a looming ecological disaster that will endanger not only  
4 countless species, but ultimately humanity itself. Now more than ever, there is an  
5 urgency to renew and strengthen our commitment to address this global crisis. In  
6 the past five years, the climate crisis has substantially worsened. According to the  
7 U.S. Department of the Interior, climate trends have moved substantially in the  
8 wrong direction:

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- 10 • Temperatures are rising worldwide due to greenhouse gases trapping more  
11 heat in the atmosphere, which is in turn heating the oceans and impacting  
12 climate everywhere.
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  - 14 • Higher ocean temperatures have produced more severe storms and floods,  
15 while higher temperatures overall have resulted in more severe droughts,  
16 wildfires and water shortages due to shrinking snowpack.
  - 17 • Glaciers are melting at a faster rate along with sea ice in the Arctic and  
18 Antarctic, raising sea levels and threatening coastal communities and  
19 estuarine ecosystems.
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  - 21 • Higher northern temperatures have begun melting the permafrost,  
22 releasing methane and producing a vicious cycle accelerating further  
23 warming.

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25 Sustaining the environment is an important component of the Jewish value of *bal*  
26 *tashchit*, “do not destroy.” Responding to this challenge is equally motivated by  
27 the principle of *pikuach nefesh*, that one who saves a life, saves the entire world.

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29 Recent events also call out for action. Climate change is exacerbating existing  
30 racial and socioeconomic inequities. Climate hazards and natural disasters are  
31 harming marginalized, low-income and vulnerable communities – particularly  
32 communities of color – at accelerating rates around the world. There is a growing  
33 number of climate refugees leaving regions increasingly uninhabitable due to  
34 flood, fire, drought, rising sea levels, and conflict over dwindling natural  
35 resources. Failure to address climate change in the next ten years will have  
36 catastrophic consequences.

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38 **The Jewish Council for Public Affairs:**

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40 • Reaffirms that climate change “is an overarching concern at this moment  
41 and for the long-term future. It touches on all social justice issues with  
42 which we engage. We must bring Dr. Martin Luther King’s ‘fierce  
43 urgency of now’ to our efforts to adapt, to reduce, and ultimately to  
44 reverse climate change and its consequences.”

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46 • Believes that climate change poses an existential threat to humanity.  
47 Scientists agree that we have no more than a decade to reverse climate  
48 change before suffering catastrophic consequences.

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50 • Believes that climate change is a:

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52 ○ Planetary issue, and international cooperation is integral to halting  
53 and adapting to this crisis. It is imperative that the U.S. uphold and

strengthen international agreements, not just by rejoining the Paris Accords, but by modeling bold action and rallying international leaders to cut emissions even more aggressively.

- National security and human rights issue, as floods and droughts disrupt food production and destabilize governments, contributing to conflict and resulting in a growing tide of climate refugees throughout the world.
- Public health issue that directly impacts quality of life. It disproportionately affects underserved and minority communities, widening the equity gap in our society and harming societal health.
- Racial justice issue felt disproportionately by communities of color around the globe. We must ensure that low-income communities and communities of color, both in the U.S. and internationally, do not suffer an undue burden of climate change, environmental destruction, and pollution's impacts.

- Acknowledges that our long-term economic health is intertwined with environmental sustainability; it is not one or the other.
- Believes it is critical that the U.S. take a leadership role in the promotion of greater global collaboration to combat this crisis.

**The Jewish community relations field should:**

- Educate one another and demand that our leaders be guided by the best available science, listening to climate scientists as they advance

83 understanding of the threats and challenges, as well as work together  
84 towards achieving climate justice.

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86 • Collaborate with environmental leaders, advocacy groups and concerned  
87 citizens to publicize the importance of this issue and take action at the  
88 state and local level in response to climate change.  
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- 90 • Support and advocate for programs, policies, and regulations at all levels  
91 of government that:
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  - 93 ○ Reduce carbon dioxide and other environmentally harmful  
94 emissions, including through efforts to keep fossil fuels in the  
95 ground, e.g., moratoriums and/or tax disincentives on new coal  
96 leases on public land and prohibitions on drilling for oil in the  
97 Arctic and off the California coast.  
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  - 99 ○ Encourage development of carbon sequestration technologies,  
100 including both natural systems (reforestation) and physical,  
101 chemical and biological solutions.  
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  - 103 ○ Support public and private investment in carbon-free clean energy,  
104 mass transit, high-density housing and other areas that mitigate  
105 climate change over the next several years. As an example, such  
106 investment should be included as part of any economic recovery  
107 program to put people back to work in response to the recent  
108 pandemic. It should include resources to support job placement and  
109 training for workers in transition from other energy industries.  
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  - 111 ○ Provide communities the resources and tools they need to adapt to  
112 the impacts of climate change.

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- Eliminate of tax subsidies for oil and gas and support effective economic incentives and disincentives that speed the replacement of dirty sources of energy with clean, carbon-free options such as solar and wind.

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- Improve standards for utilities and transportation that continually reduce pollution over time.

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- Enable states to implement energy standards that set more efficient energy use and reduced levels of pollution than federal regulations.

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- Reduce the carbon footprint and water consumption of food production and promote sustainable, locally-sourced agriculture, including an end to federal subsidies to Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations (CAFOs).

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- Encourage Jewish synagogues and agencies to:

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- Include a specific focus on the climate crisis within the curricula of their education programs.

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- Encourage their clergy at all levels to elevate the importance of the climate crisis to the highest levels of Jewish concern for congregants.

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- Include a focus on the climate crisis within programming and outreach to both affiliated and non-affiliated Jews.

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- 143           ○ Include climate change impacts on their current building
- 144           operations or within the plans for remodeling or new construction
- 145           projects.