

San Diego-Imperial Counties Labor Council Resolution on Climate Literacy in the Schools

Whereas, the leading scientific bodies in the United States, including the American Association for the Advancement of Science, Federation of American Scientists, National Science Foundation, National Academy of Sciences, and the California Academy of Sciences along with international bodies such as the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, the Royal Society, and many others have established that the Earth's climate is changing and that the largest contribution to that change is humankind's release of into the atmosphere of heat-trapping gases; and

Whereas, the magnitude and rate of climate change due to increases in heat-trapping gases appears to be unprecedented and risks pushing human civilization out of the relatively stable climate in which it has developed over the last 12,000 years; and

Whereas, in light of the overwhelming international consensus that action is needed to address Climate change despite the Trump administration's denial of scientific reality; and

Whereas the state of California is highly vulnerable to the effects of climate change as the average temperature has risen significantly since 1895 resulting in an environment in which wildfires become more intense, sea level rises, and reliable water supplies and local ecosystems are all at risk; and

Whereas, some 89% of the California public sees climate change as a serious threat to the economy with California on the forefront in addressing the issue through legislation and regulation, such as the Global Warming Solutions Act of 2006 (AB 32) and updated in SB 32 (2016); and

Whereas, the San Diego-Imperial Counties Labor Council has endorsed an Environmental Caucus Mission Statement that notes that "the science on climate change has only presented us with more and more severe warnings about the dire consequences of continuing on the same course. As a historical force for progressive change and social justice, the labor movement can, and must, play a powerful role in calling for swift action to address the climate crisis" and specifically calls for us to "Educate our members and the community about the pressing environmental issues of our day and possible solutions to the present crisis"; and

Whereas, the state as well as local governments are and will continue to work on climate change initiatives; and

Whereas the fate of current and future climate change initiatives is multigenerational, yet the state of California has recognized that "... K-12 students in California do not currently have consistent access to adequately funded, high-quality learning experiences, in and out of the classroom, that build environmental literacy"; and

Whereas civic organizations have gone on record calling for students to be educated on the impact of climate change, including the California Parent Teacher Association (PTA), the National Education Association, and Sierra Club California; and

Whereas, educators, as historically a force for reason, progressive change, and social justice can, and must, play a powerful role in calling for swift action to address climate disruption and in teaching tangible solutions that ensure we are strengthening, not weakening our communities and creating a path to an equitable, just transition to a more sustainable economy; and

Whereas, it is essential that all high school students in their classrooms and communities not only explore and understand the causes and urgent consequences of climate disruption but also explore and understand the many, varied and evolving opportunities and strategies to adapt to current and now unavoidable consequences of heat-trapping gas pollution, and to mitigate heat-trapping gas emissions so as to avoid consequences that are still preventable; and

Whereas, in the context of California's growing commitment to STEAM (science, technology, engineering, art and math) education, the climate situation should also be recognized as an unparalleled opportunity and civic mandate to equip and prepare students to participate in and contribute to the multiple, burgeoning disciplines and occupations involved in both studying and responding to climate disruption, including energy efficient and zero carbon building practices, local renewable energy generation; and

Whereas, most school districts do not currently have an articulated strategy to assist district educators to develop or implement comprehensive curriculum on climate disruption; and

Whereas, because climate change represents a mortal threat to all of human society, and it is critical that we equip all students with the knowledge and skills they will need to understand and respond effectively to the climate situation in order to shape a sustainable future for generations to come.

Be It Therefore Resolved, that the San Diego-Imperial Counties Labor Council work with local education unions to encourage local school boards to ensure that all high school and community college students graduate climate literate.

Be It Further Resolved, that the San Diego-Imperial Counties Labor Council work with local education unions and environmental allies to encourage local school boards to work with students, teachers, and community members to develop a comprehensive climate literacy program that includes new curriculum and materials, professional development and training opportunities for educators, and the creation of links to environmental organizations and community groups for equity and inclusion.