



---

# Climate Change

A statement of recognition and support from the Texas Coalition of Black Democrats

## Background

Human activities are altering our climate system. The science is clear that our planet Earth is getting warmer, primarily due to burning fossil fuels. That is, the burning of coal and petroleum release carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases into Earth's atmosphere. As a result of the climate change phenomenon, scientists predict that sea levels will rise, surface temperature will continue to increase and weather events will become more extreme and frequent.

The impact of climate change on communities of color is even more frightening. According to a recent University of California study, climate change will disproportionately impact the health, economics and quality of life of disadvantaged Americans. The poor and minorities are more likely to die due to extreme weather events (like heatwaves or floods), they will spend a higher percentage of their paychecks on electricity, are more likely to work in industries considered heavy emitters of greenhouse gases, and will breathe dirtier air. Ignoring this "climate gap" will reinforce and amplify current and future socioeconomic and racial disparities.

## Recommendations

The Texas Coalition of Black Democrats recognizes these threats to minorities in Texas and supports the following initiatives to combat climate change:

- Support President Obama's historic Clean Power Plan to cut carbon pollution from power plants by 30% by 2030. Minorities and the poor disproportionately live nearby coal-fired power plants. Reducing exposure to particle pollution will avoid a projected 1500 premature deaths, 90,000 asthma attacks in children, over 1500 heart attacks, 1700 hospital admissions and 300,000 missed school/work days. We expect our state officials to comply with these new rules by creating a Texas plan to reduce carbon emissions, and work with key stakeholders to ensure that a Texas plan takes into consideration the environmental impacts to minority communities.

- We encourage the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality and the Railroad Commission to aggressively monitor the amount of methane being emitted into the atmosphere due to increased fracking. Methane is 86 times more heat trapping than carbon dioxide, which makes it a significant contributing factor in accelerating Earth's temperature. Additionally, minority communities breathe more of this polluted air as we work and live in close proximity to these well sites.
- We want our state's oil and gas regulatory agency to be more transparent, inclusive and to encourage alternative energy sources in our state. The Texas Railroad Commission has long been seen as a classic good ole' boy agency. It has done little to protect vulnerable communities throughout the state from drilling, and seldom sides with the public on key issues related to public health and property rights. We want a Railroad Commission that is reflective of our diverse state and a champion for the rights of everyday Texans over big oil interests.
- Finally, we want to see a "green economy" emerge in Texas. We view a gradual transition to renewable energy not only as a sustainable solution in combating climate change but also a means by which to eradicate poverty. Greener industries like (solar and wind) are growing faster than the overall economy, states with "greener" portfolios have done better to withstand the great recession and green jobs are accessible to workers without a college degree. We would like to see increased access to these industries for minority owned businesses and chambers of commerce, state appropriations targeting workforce training opportunities for the poor and open markets for these industries to flourish. Finally, we would like to see regulatory reforms and business models that make energy efficiency accessible, profitable and market-driven. These reforms are critical for controlling the energy costs of low income Texans.