



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Brad Hoylman-Sigal

## Krueger, Hoylman Release Letter Urging Action At Paris Climate Talks

BRAD HOYLMAN-SIGAL November 18, 2015

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NEW YORK – Today, State Senators Liz Krueger and Brad Hoylman released a letter addressed to President Barack Obama, Secretary of State John F. Kerry, and Special Envoy for Climate Change Todd Stern, urging the U.S. delegation to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, in Paris, to push for a strong, realistic agreement that

significantly contributes to arresting the increase in average global temperatures that is causing climate change.

The letter was signed by fifteen State Senators and fifteen Assembly Members, all Democrats, together representing over six million New Yorkers. Though invited, not a single Republican state legislator was willing to add his or her name. The full text of the letter can be read below, and is also available [here](#).

"The Paris talks represent our best hope for finally setting up a workable framework to tackle climate change," said **Senator Krueger**. "Every year we delay taking action the threat gets bigger and the cost gets higher, both in terms of prevention and mitigation. American leadership is indispensable, and President Obama, Secretary Kerry, and Mr. Stern have our support and encouragement to bring home the strongest possible agreement. Failure is simply not an option."

"Climate change is a looming catastrophe for our planet," said **Senator Hoylman, Ranking Member of the Senate Environmental Conservation Committee**. "As a resident of New York City, we saw a terrible preview of its devastation when Superstorm Sandy hit my Senate district. If the international community fails to act now, it may be too late to avert the worst effects of global warming. I stand with my colleagues in calling on the nations assembling in Paris for the U.N. Climate Change Conference to confront the crisis head on. New York must also do its part by codifying a comprehensive Climate Action Plan that will help achieve a more secure future for future generations. I thank Senator Krueger for her leadership on this issue."

The Conference of the Parties (COP21) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) will meet in Paris from November 30th to December 11th, 2015. It is the successor to similar meetings held over several decades around the world, including

those in Rio de Janeiro, Kyoto, and Copenhagen. Delegates from 195 countries will attend the conference, with the goal of cutting carbon emissions and containing global warming to avoid the worst effects of climate disruption.

The legislators' letter recognizes the threat to New Yorkers posed by climate change and calls for agreement in Paris on several issues: a commitment to keep the increase in global average temperatures below at least 2°C, and preferably 1.5°C; acknowledging a "carbon budget" of 800 gigatons of total, cumulative anthropogenic carbon emissions; and a fair and equitable agreement based on voluntary contribution pledges with significant measuring, reporting and verification (MRV). The letter also urges the establishment of a framework for greater emissions reduction pledges in the future, with goals to be revised every five years as technology and other factors change and develop.

**Senator Jose M. Serrano said:** "There are few issues as important as protecting our precious environment from the threat of climate change. As temperatures and sea levels continue to rise, so do the occurrence of natural disasters. We can no longer afford to not take action to stop the devastating effects of global warming. I urge the American delegation to work towards a carbon-free future."

**Senator Marc Panepinto said:** "As the representative of more than 47 miles of Lake Erie shoreline, nothing is more important than protecting and preserving our waterfront. That starts with tackling and reversing the harmful effects caused by climate change. I urge President Obama and the members of our United States delegation to advocate for a strong agreement on behalf of all people and help put an end to this reversible issue once and for all."

**Senator Jesse E. Hamilton said:** "Through sustained action our communities, indeed our world, can live up to the challenge of arresting climate change. I commend President Obama for

confronting these challenges head on and I hope that in the upcoming Paris conference we can build on commitments across the world to stop climate change. All New Yorkers should remain engaged with this issue, not least because of our recent experience with Superstorm Sandy and the threat of even stronger hurricanes hitting the Atlantic seaboard. Here in New York State, I am heartened by the measures we have put in place thus far to weave environmental awareness into policy making, but we should not let up in our efforts to advance the conscientious approach we need to tackle these challenges. I stand ready to help guide New York on the path to a more sustainable future.

**Assembly Assistant Speaker Felix W. Ortiz, sponsor of the Fossil Fuel Divestment Act**

**(A8011A/S5873) said:** "Combatting climate change will be best accomplished by taking action on multiple fronts, by reducing greenhouse gases and by reducing our financial investments in companies which profit from the fossil fuels that generate those gases. It is my hope that the talks in Paris this December will results in meaningful progress toward both of these approaches. Divestment from fossil fuels is the financial key to success in reducing catastrophic climate change for our children's futures and the future of our planet."

**Assembly Member Barbara Lifton said:** "As the leaders of the world gather in Paris next month to broker an international agreement to combat Climate Change, I urge that we take the strongest possible action against greenhouse gases. Our scientists tell us that the impacts of Climate Change will continue to escalate for everyone across the globe, even when we eliminate emissions, due to the existing carbon levels in our atmosphere, stored in our oceans, and released from the melting permafrost. We are clearly in an existential crisis, which begs the strongest possible international agreement to quickly and drastically bring down greenhouse gases. We must put in place a worldwide Marshall Pan for renewable energy – and we need to do that in Paris this year."

**Assembly Member Walter T. Mosley said:** "It is important that we think globally in the 21st century as climate change knows no borders or delineates its effects between regions. I along with my colleagues in New York state government urge our federal representatives to commit to a carbon-free future so that our children may enjoy the precious green spaces we are fighting to preserve every day."

**Assembly Member Nily Rozic said:** "The opportunity to come together and determine how best to approach to the detrimental impacts climate change has on our environment, health, and economy lies in COP21. Today, I proudly join my colleagues in pushing for global leadership as we can no longer prolong the need for a framework with long-term solutions that benefit all."

**Assembly Member Fred W. Thiele, Jr. said:** "Climate change is real, and communities and ecosystems across the globe are experiencing the negative consequences. It is critical that every country, every state does its part to help reduce their greenhouse gas emissions."

**Assembly Member Steven Otis said:** "We cannot overstate the importance of achieving an effective, aggressive agreement on climate change policy. New Yorkers, like others throughout the world, are already experiencing the economic and emotional toll of catastrophic weather events that threaten our health, property, public safety and, indeed, our way of life."

November 18, 2015

The President

The White House

1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.  
Washington, DC 20500

The Honorable John F. Kerry  
Secretary of State  
U.S. Department of State  
2201 C St., N.W.  
Washington, DC 20520

The Honorable Todd Stern  
Special Envoy for Climate Change  
U.S. Department of State  
2201 C St., N.W.  
Washington, DC 20520

**RE: 21st Session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP21/CMP11)**

Dear Mr. President, Mr. Secretary, and Mr. Stern:

As members of the New York State Legislature, we urge you to do everything in your power to ensure that the 21st Session of the Conference of the Parties (COP21) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in Paris this November and December results in a strong, realistic agreement to aggressively mitigate greenhouse gas emissions and put the planet on a trajectory to stem the increase in global average temperatures.

For New Yorkers, as for people throughout the U.S. and the world, climate change is already impacting our health, welfare, and prosperity. Rising sea levels, increasingly intense storms and droughts, threats to global water and food supplies and loss of critical biodiversity jeopardize lives, livelihoods, and the integrity of our society. New Yorkers face a long list of impacts and escalating risks associated with climate change, including increasing healthcare costs, higher insurance rates, loss of property value, contamination of water and soil, losses to agriculture, fisheries and tourism, and destruction of homes and displacement of families and communities.

To address the current impacts and avoid the worst effects of climate change, COP21 must at the very least commit to a goal of keeping the increase in global average temperatures below 2°C. However, a 2°C increase will still lead to significant negative impacts, and evidence suggests that a cap of 1.5°C would increase the ability of societies to adapt to climate disruption. Regardless, what is clear is that if we allow “business as usual” to continue we face the prospect of temperatures increasing by more than 5°C by the end of the century, with potentially catastrophic results.

Maintaining a 2°C level of warming will require COP21 to address the implications of a “carbon budget” of around 800 gigatons of total, cumulative anthropogenic carbon emissions. The nations of the world have already emitted well over half of this budget, leaving less than 300 gigatons of emissions before passing the threshold. To prevent “overspending,” it will be necessary to eventually reach net zero greenhouse gas emissions globally. The acceptable timeframe for this goal must be established using the best available science.

Moving toward net zero emissions will require a range of actions, including research and development, innovative power generation, carbon pricing, demand management and energy efficiency. Addressing deforestation, agricultural practices and other land use issues will be key elements. Regulation of black smoke and tropospheric ozone, and the elimination of HFC

emissions as admissible under the Montreal Protocol are low-cost measures that would have an immediate positive impact on greenhouse gas emissions. In addition, financing mechanisms and solutions must be created to help developing nations transition to cleaner growth models and invest in resiliency, augmenting economic development through energy efficiency and renewable and distributed energy investments. A truly successful global agreement must be fair and equitable in order to gain support from both developed and developing countries.

The realities of international diplomacy require that an accord from COP21 be based on voluntary contribution pledges. Insisting on legally binding commitments will only result in the world's largest emitters walking away from the negotiating table. However, measuring, reporting and verification (MRV) of contribution pledges is also essential. Some countries may balk at MRV, but this obstacle can and must be overcome. The contributions of non-national organizations, such as state, provincial and municipal governments must also be recognized and included, as should those of non-governmental organizations and major corporations, many of whom have recently come forward with strong commitments to reduce their carbon footprints.

Any agreement reached in Paris must not be viewed as a static, one-off accord, to be revisited ten or fifteen years in the future. Instead, the agreement must establish a framework for further action by the international community and individual countries, empowering them to achieve greater emissions reductions than would otherwise be possible. Countries must agree to submit revised emissions goals every five years as technology and other factors change, with a one-way "ratchet" in place to ensure increasingly ambitious benchmarks. Such a commitment would send a clear signal to the private sector that the future will be carbon-free. With greater certainty about the future, the energy industry and investors will be incentivized to take a leading role in the transition to clean energy.



We understand that the Paris conference will not produce a single and complete solution to the challenge of climate change. But it is vital that a global agreement be reached that accelerates our trajectory toward a carbon-free future. The technology exists and the economics are favorable for a rapid transition away from self-destructive practices; but the longer we wait, the more expensive and difficult the inevitable transition becomes.

Now is the time for bold leadership and long-term thinking. Without action, untold millions of people throughout the world, today and in the future, will suffer. We, along with the people of New York who we represent, are relying on you to deliver that action. Failure is simply not an option.