

## Open Letter from Florida Mayors to Former Governor Jeb Bush

January 21, 2016

Dear Governor Bush:

As mayors representing municipalities across Florida, we call on you to acknowledge the reality and urgency of climate change and to address the upcoming crisis it presents our communities. Our cities and towns are already coping with the impacts of climate change today. We will need leadership and concrete solutions from our next president. As a candidate for that office hailing from Florida, we ask you to meet with us to discuss the future of our communities in a warming climate.

We are already experiencing the effects of a changing climate. Sea levels off the coast of South Florida rose about eight inches in the twentieth century.<sup>1</sup> As a result, we have seen more tidal flooding, more severe storm surges, and more saltwater intrusion into aquifers. By 2050, mean sea level around Florida is expected to rise about a foot,<sup>2</sup> a shift which could wipe out as much as \$4 billion in taxable real estate in the four-county region of Southeast Florida.<sup>3</sup> At three feet of sea level rise, the loss could total \$31 billion, with large sections of the Everglades, the Florida Keys and the Miami metropolitan region under water.<sup>4</sup>

Local governments are working to manage the present and future challenges of climate change. Many are collaborating at the regional level through the Southeast Florida Climate Compact. Locally, communities across the state are developing action plans, investing in stormwater pumps, upgrading stormwater and sewer systems, and revising building codes. However, these expensive measures to protect homes, businesses, and infrastructure will only serve as a temporary stopgap unless global warming emissions are substantially reduced.

Adapting to climate change at the local level is necessary, but it is not sufficient. We need a realistic national plan to slow global warming emissions and avoid the worst impacts of climate change. The science is well established: protecting the long-term future of our cities must include preventing global temperatures from rising above the internationally recognized target of two degrees celsius above pre-industrial levels. To get there, we need strong leadership from our next president to achieve national policies that reduce global warming emissions at home and global leadership to ensure other countries are doing their part. The U.S. should be at the forefront of the transition to clean energy, creating jobs for Americans while conserving our environment for future generations.

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<sup>1</sup> "Mean Sea Level Trend 8724580 Key West, Florida," NOAA: *Tides and Currents*  
[http://tidesandcurrents.noaa.gov/sltrends/sltrends\\_station.shtml?stnid=8724580](http://tidesandcurrents.noaa.gov/sltrends/sltrends_station.shtml?stnid=8724580)

<sup>2</sup> "Come Heat and High Water: Climate Risk in the Southeastern U.S. and Texas," Risky Business, July 2015  
<http://riskybusiness.org/site/assets/uploads/2015/09/Climate-Risk-in-Southeast-and-Texas.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> "Rising sea levels, falling real estate values," *Miami Herald*, 11-09-2015  
<http://www.miamiherald.com/news/local/community/miami-dade/article1957294.html>

<sup>4</sup> "A Region Responds to a Changing Climate: Southeast Florida Regional Climate Change Compact Counties Regional Climate Action Plan," Southeast Florida Regional Climate Change Compact, October 2012  
<http://www.southeastfloridaclimatecompact.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/regional-climate-action-plan-final-ada-compliant.pdf>

Governor Bush, as the former governor of Florida and a presidential candidate from Miami, we urge you to face this challenge head on. As governor, you commissioned a 2006 Department of Environmental Protection white paper on climate change science and solutions, a study which acknowledged the severity of the crisis and the importance of emissions reductions strategies such as carbon taxing and cap and trade.<sup>5</sup> In April 2015, you called for the United States “to work with the rest of the world to negotiate a way to reduce carbon emissions.”<sup>6</sup> Yet the following month, you questioned the scientific consensus on climate change, calling it “convoluted” and “intellectual arrogance.”<sup>7</sup> And later on the campaign trail, you backed away from advancing policy solutions, claiming that climate change “will ultimately be solved by a person in a garage somewhere.”<sup>8</sup>

Governor Bush, ignoring climate science and doubling down on fossil fuels will only make the climate crisis more rapid and expensive. With the presidential election fast approaching, it is critical that your positions on these issues are well informed by the experience of our communities. Please meet with us to discuss the risks facing Florida communities due to climate change and help us chart a path forward to protect our state and the entire United States. We cordially request a meeting by Feb 29, 2016.

Sincerely,

Peggy Bell	Mayor, Town of Cutler Bay
Jim Cason	Mayor, City of Coral Gables
Joy Cooper	Mayor, City of Hallandale Beach
Daniel Dietch	Mayor, Town of Surfside
Eugene Flinn	Mayor, Village of Palmetto Bay
Connie Leon-Kreps	Mayor, North Bay Village
Cindy Lerner	Mayor, Village of Pinecrest
Mayra Peña Lindsay	Mayor, Village of Key Biscayne
Jeri Muoio	Mayor, City of West Palm Beach
Martin Packer	Mayor, Village of Bal Harbour
Tomas Regalado	Mayor, City of Miami
Gary Resnick	Mayor, City of Wilton Manors
Jack Seiler	Mayor, City of Fort Lauderdale
Glenn Singer	Mayor, Town of Golden Beach
Philip Stoddard	Mayor, City of South Miami

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<sup>5</sup> “Whitepaper on Climate Change Science and Policy Options,” Florida Department of Environmental Protection, 01-09-2007 <http://www.psc.state.fl.us/library/FILINGS/07/00208-07/00208-07.PDF>

<sup>6</sup> “Jeb Bush ‘concerned’ about climate change,” *The Hill*, 04-17-2015 <http://thehill.com/blogs/ballot-box/239210-jeb-bush-concerned-about-climate-change>

<sup>7</sup> “Jeb Bush rails against ‘intellectual arrogance’ in climate change debate,” *CNN Politics*, 05-20-2015 <http://www.cnn.com/2015/05/20/politics/jeb-bush-climate-change/index.html>

<sup>8</sup> “Jeb Bush thinks climate change will be fixed by ‘a person in a garage somewhere,’” *Miami New Times*, 07-09-2015 <http://www.miaminewtimes.com/news/jeb-bush-thinks-climate-change-will-be-fixed-by-a-person-in-a-garage-somewhere-7739675>