

**Statement by Ross C. “Rocky” Anderson
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Agriculture, and Environment Committee
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I’m Rocky Anderson, former mayor of Salt Lake City and founder and Executive Director of High Road for Human Rights Advocacy Project, headquartered in Salt Lake City.

For many years, I have intensely sought out the facts about climate change. What I have discovered is compelling – and incredibly disturbing, particularly when considering what kind of world we will be leaving to our children, grandchildren, and billions of others who will be severely impacted because of our failure to significantly reduce the emission of billions of tons of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases into the atmosphere.

In terms of the preventable tragedies that may befall billions of people and our capacity to stop much of it from happening, this is the greatest moral issue facing humankind today.

Scientists have known for over 100 years that certain gases, such as carbon dioxide and methane – as compared to gases like oxygen – actually capture, retain, and emit infrared radiation, such as the heat reflected by the earth. Having a certain amount of those greenhouse gases in the atmosphere is what keeps our planet from freezing. The safe level of between 280 and 300 parts per million was maintained for at least 10,000 years before the industrial age. However, the heating property of greenhouse gases can become dangerous to life on earth when there are too many of those gases in the atmosphere. That’s where we are now, with 389 parts per million and increasing at 2-3% per year – and we’re headed for far worse in the future, particularly since some of those gases, like carbon dioxide, accumulate in the atmosphere for 100 to 1,000 years or more. The concentration of CO₂ is 30% + higher now than at any time during at least 800,000 years before the beginning of the industrial age. That is primarily because of human activities – activities that, with good public policy, can be changed.

The atmosphere is actually very delicate and thin, vulnerable to the billions of tons of emissions humankind pollutes into it. Carl Sagen once said that if you varnished a school-room globe, the coat of varnish would be as thick in relation to the globe as our atmosphere is to Earth.

When I was Mayor, we made climate protection a priority at all times when making and implementing municipal policies. As a result, we reduced greenhouse gas emissions from municipal operations by 31% in four years and, in many instances, saved a lot of money. With committed leadership, those sorts of results, and better, can be achieved by every governmental entity.

Instead, what we see here and throughout much of the rest of the country is a failure of leadership. Lost opportunities abound, while the Chinese are cleaning our clocks. Five years ago, China essentially had no presence in wind or solar manufacturing. Today, China is the largest maker of wind turbines and solar panels. And that is just the tip of the proverbial iceberg.

In Utah, most of our elected officials seem content with letting others take advantage of the new clean-energy economy. Certain legislators talk of renegeing on Utah's commitments to the Western States Climate Initiative, while it was recently reported that Massachusetts earned \$50 million from its participation in the cap and trade program under the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative.

There are a lot of people who, in good faith, are confused about climate change. For those who still wonder where the truth lies, please consider that the state of the science is astoundingly consistent. The largest scientific collaboration in history, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change; the national science academies of every industrialized nation, including the United States; and Utah's top scientists are *all* in agreement: We are facing a climate crisis caused by the burning of coal, oil, and gas – and if we continue along this path, tragedy and untold misery will result to billions of people, including, very likely, our own descendants. Also, please recall that former President George W. Bush, former UK Prime Minister Tony Blair and UK Prime Minister Gordon Brown have been in agreement: Climate change is a serious problem (those were President Bush's words) and the US needs to help lead toward solutions by vastly reducing the emissions of greenhouse gases.

In a recent statement on ocean acidification, 70 science academies, including the US national Academy of Sciences, expressed their alarm that at current CO₂ emission rates, all coral reefs and polar ecosystems will be severely affected by 2050 or earlier, with significant reductions in marine food supplies, and that such acidification is irreversible on timescales of at least tens of thousands of years. According to those 70 science academies, “large and rapid reductions of global CO₂ emissions are needed globally by at least 50% by 2050.”

Our public policy makers stand in a position of public trust – not just for the present but as stewards for those who come along in the future. We can, as it seems is happening in Utah, approach the grand opportunities offered by clean, renewable sources of energy and conservation with disdain, timidity, and a lack of leadership and caring for those who will suffer the consequences of our inaction, or we can rise to this tremendous challenge and help to create a safer, healthier, more peaceful world.

Please join leaders elsewhere who are working hard to protect our miraculous planet and its inhabitants, including our brothers and sisters worldwide, now and in the future, who will be dramatically impacted by our choices today.