

**An Open Letter on Climate Change
from California Climate Scientists and Economists**

February 19, 2014

Dear Governor Brown and California State Legislators:

California's leadership is needed now more than ever to address the risks of a dangerously warming climate. We urge the state's policy makers to adopt a science-based, heat-trapping emissions target for 2030 that puts California on a path to meeting our 2050 goals.

The science is clear that human activity is the dominant cause of warming over the last half century.ⁱ If global emissions continue to rise, the scope and severity of impacts will accelerate. Already communities across California are being forced to cope with many risks, including increased wildfires, more frequent and extreme heat waves, a strained water management system, growing risks to high value agricultural commodities, greater summer electricity demand, and more coastal flooding.ⁱⁱ

While we must adapt to the impacts of a changing climate, California must also take ambitious steps to reduce heat-trapping emissions that would cause much more devastating impacts in the decades to come. We are well-positioned to lead the world in this effort. The state has a goal of 80 percent reduction in global warming emissions below 1990 levels by 2050, established by Executive Order S-3-05. More importantly, California's policy makers deserve tremendous credit for adopting and implementing the California Global Warming Solutions Act of 2006 (AB 32) and numerous coordinated sustainability actions. The state has brought innovative climate policies off the drawing board and into practice, spurring investment, innovation, and jobs in a growing "green technology" sector. Moreover, the state's progress demonstrates that it is possible for a growing major economy to reduce emissions substantially at very modest cost.

California must continue to play a leadership role and to serve as a model for much-needed federal and international action. Maintaining a price on carbon dioxide and other global warming pollutants is key, but not sufficient to adequately reduce emissions. Policies that promote renewable energy, low carbon fuels, and cleaner transportation are also critical.

Yet as we approach 2020, we need medium-term targets to continue the progress we have begun. To achieve the steep reductions necessary to limit the worst impacts of climate change, lawmakers and regulators should adopt and implement enforceable emissions caps for 2030 and beyond. Every sector involved in addressing climate change, from energy to transportation, will need sufficient time to prepare to meet new targets. The longer we wait the harder and more costly it will be. Please begin now to set a science-based, heat-trapping emissions target for 2030.

i. Climate Change 2013: The Physical Science Basis. Working Group I Contribution to the IPCC 5th Assessment Report - Changes to the Underlying Scientific/Technical Assessment. 2013. Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. Available online at <http://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar5/wg1>

ii. Moser, S., J. Ekstrom, G. Franco. 2012. Our Changing Climate 2012 Vulnerability & Adaptation to the Increasing Risks from Climate Change in California. Prepared for the California Energy Commission and the California Natural Resources Agency. Publication # CEC-500-2012-007. Available online at http://climatechange.ca.gov/climate_action_team/reports/third_assessment/index.html

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