



Office of the Mayor  
City of Los Angeles

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### MAYOR VILLARAIGOSA DELIVERS REMARKS AT NATIONAL CLIMATE SUMMIT

*Mayor Villaraigosa's keynote address, "Global Warming and Local Responsibility," challenges fellow mayors to combat climate change*

SEATTLE – Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa joined former President Bill Clinton and New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg today for the 2007 Mayors Climate Protection Summit held by the US Conference of Mayors in Seattle.

Mayor Villaraigosa delivered a keynote address, where he challenged fellow mayors to develop local initiatives to combat the global challenge of climate change. The following is the text of his remarks:

**"Global Warming and Local Responsibility"  
(As prepared for delivery)  
Seattle, Washington  
November 2, 2007**

It is an honor to be here this morning with all of you in the Emerald City. And to be here with this mayor. Ladies and gentlemen, fellow Mayors: Please put your hands together for our gracious -- and green -- host, Seattle Mayor Greg Nickels.

I can't think of a more fitting, or a more beautiful, home for this summit. Greg and the people of this jewel of a city have been so important on the issue that brings us here. They've been the earliest heralds advancing an urgent and insistent message. A message that says: We have a local responsibility.

We have a local responsibility to apply our imaginations and our talent in solving our greatest global challenge.

I don't care what city you represent. The heat is rising.

Last year was the hottest on record. And the heat is rising.

It's rising in New England, where scientists tell us that recent winters have grown so warm that some birds are no longer even flying south for the winter. It's rising across the West, where our snow packs have melted away except at the most rarefied elevations. It's rising from coast to coast, where many of our reservoirs and water stores are circling the drain.

Of course, anyone who doubts the reality of climate change is welcome to take measure of the rising political heat. Because all around the United States of America, local elected officials are breaking a sweat thinking about how water rationing may be just a summer away.

I thought the *New York Times Magazine* hit the nail on the head in that cover story a couple weeks back: They said, it's not that we're going to drown in rising seas. We're going to die of thirst.

The heat is rising.

It's rising in the Gulf of Mexico, where climatologists warn that for the foreseeable future, the escalating surface water temperatures will intensify the violence of approaching Atlantic storms. Just ask Mayor Ray Nagin of New Orleans or Mayor AJ Holloway of Biloxi about the destructive truth of this phenomenon.

And the heat is rising where I come from.

Last year in Los Angeles, we got just 22 percent of normal rainfall. As a result, we have been scorched by fire. Just last week, Californians could see and feel the heat of a warming planet right outside of our own doors and windows. Fires propelled by gusting Santa Ana winds charred an area more than one-and-a-half times larger than the entire City of Los Angeles. 500,000 people evacuated across Southern California. Untold billions in combined property loss. More than 2,000 families made homeless.

And another thing happened last week.

Last week, the Bush Administration was caught red-handed – again – suppressing the science of global warming.

This time, an unidentified White House editor, deleted key portions of the Senate testimony of the Director of the CDC on the health effects of climate change.

Left on that White House cutting room floor were six pages of findings about the diseases, ailments, and pandemics likely to thrive on a warming earth.

I don't know. Maybe it's me. Maybe it's that I'm from Los Angeles and I've seen too many old movies: But this seems like information that ought to go on the official Senate record.

Mayors, I want you to imagine what we could achieve if we had a leader in the White House who actually believed in science. Because we know it's not possible to have a real conversation about climate change policy if we stay silent on the significance of 2008.

. . . we can no longer afford to tolerate the routine substitution of science fiction, for scientific fact.

The facts are all around us. The U.N. Climate Change study earlier this year slammed the case shut. Increases in greenhouse gases can be attributed to human activity with a ninety-percent degree of certainty. And quote, the "warming of the climate system is unequivocal."

The fact is, in my home state of California, we're looking at a dry century, with temperatures expected to rise by between 3 and 12 degrees.

Scientists are also projecting a loss of more than thirty percent of the snow-pack in the Sierras; a sea level rise of more than six inches; and an increase in heat wave days which spark extreme and extraordinary demands for the production of energy.

Like Mayor Greg Nickels and mayors around the country, we in Los Angeles believe that we have a local responsibility to fight this fire.

I tell people practically everywhere I go. My administration's goal is to make Los Angeles the cleanest and greenest big city in America.

Now, I have to admit: When I say that, sometimes people ask me whether I'm talking about Los Angeles, California. And they're right to ask. Our past -- like America's past -- hasn't always been synonymous with sustainability.

We are a city of imagination built on a sprawling scale. To the extent we were designed, we were designed to accommodate the single-passenger automobile. As a result, we are famously choked by gridlock and by air that is unhealthy for human beings to breathe.

In Los Angeles, we paved over our namesake, the river of the Queen of the Angels from which we draw our very identity. I can understand the skepticism.

But, Mayors, I am pleased to report, the temperature is rising in Los Angeles.

We are taking back the LA River.

We believe that our future as a great global city depends on our willingness to meet the challenges of climate change.

With our Green LA Plan, we set the highest carbon reduction goal of a major city – 35 percent over the next twenty years.

To meet this goal, we're going to have to changing our institutions and our old, comfortable ways of doing business. This past week, I appointed a man named David Nahai to run our Department of Water and Power.

We've put an environmentalist in charge of America's largest municipal utility.

And together, we are taking direct aim at our city's direct contribution to global warming.

Ignoring a generation of innovation, our Department of Water and Power continues steaming stubbornly ahead on old, dirty, coal-fired technology.

We are owning up to the fact, that since we hold title to our utility, the City of Los Angeles directly owns roughly one-third of our carbon emissions.

So, when I came into office, we set a goal of getting 20 percent of our energy from renewable sources by the year 2010.

I'm proud to say that in just two years, we've nearly tripled our renewable portfolio.

Not only that, we are on a fast track to twenty percent with an even more ambitious goal of reaching 35 percent renewables in the following decade!

We believe that by investing in renewable energy, we will not only reduce our own carbon footprint, we'll leave LA's footprint on the larger power market, adding our voices to a rising chorus of consumer demand for green power everywhere.

And we need to raise our voices: Twenty years ago, the United States had an 80 percent market share in the photo voltaic cells that capture energy from the sun. Today we represent just a quarter the market. That's not merely a failure of policy.

It is a failure of imagination.

In Los Angeles, we are imagining how we can leverage our position to leverage maximum change.

Like our sister ports of Seattle and Oakland, we are uniquely positioned, at the literal gateway of Pacific Rim, where the economies of North America, Asia, and Latin America converge.

To think: 44 percent of the containerized goods shipped to the United States every year land stateside on the docks of the ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach.

On the frontlines of globalization, we're assuming local responsibility.

With our Clean Air Action Plan, our ports are boldly asserting the idea that it's time for the beneficiaries of globalization to start fighting global warming.

We're in the final stages of drafting a Clean Truck Plan, which will phase out all 16,000 dirty diesel trucks at our ports in five years. Exhaust from heavy-duty diesel engines is responsible for 34% of the nitrogen oxides that form smog.

And we're working with Mayors around the world demand tougher international standards for ocean-going vessels, which are the largest source of pollution at our ports and a significant contributor to carbon emissions.

Ultimately, in Los Angeles, we understand that our future depends on breaking with our past.

So, for the first time in our history, we're doing real planning. And we're planning based on principles of smart growth and transit-oriented development.

We are taking the position that we need to change the way we build. This month, our City Council will take up the most far-reaching private sector green-building ordinance in the country.

We know it's not just smokestacks and power plants. It's buildings -- office buildings and schools and universities -- that consume most of the power plant-generated electricity in America.

And buildings are responsible for nearly half of greenhouse emissions annually.

It is time to institute mandatory green building standards for all new development and redevelopment.

And in a city where the public affection for the single-passenger automobile verges on religion, we're telling people it's time to convert to a new faith.

We may have to spend a few years in the wilderness... but we are convinced the truth will prevail.

Cars are the fastest-growing and single-greatest source of carbon emissions.

In LA, more than fifty percent of our carbon emissions emanate from the tailpipes of the automobiles we love.

As a City, we're doing everything we can:

We've built the second- largest fleet of hybrid vehicles in the country. All of our City buses are now alternative-fueled. Last year, our efforts saved 10.6 million gallons of gasoline. And we're converting 100 percent of our trash trucks to alternative fuels by 2010.

We're also calling for big new investments in mass transit. Just think about the need in my city: A million people go to work every day on Wilshire Boulevard, and our subway system doesn't even go there. I'm committed to finding the funding in my first term.

But, Mayors, we need to lead a national conversation about the automobile industry. Our colleague, Mayor Will Wynn of Austin, Texas has been calling for greater support of plug-in hybrid technology. Will Wynn is a prophet.

By 2050, with widespread adoption of plug-in hybrids, we could cut petroleum consumption in America by 3 to 4 million barrels a day, the equivalent of taking more than 82 million cars off the road. It's time to change the tax code to promote the development of alternative engine technologies.

And we need to be willing to fight the bigger battles. It's time for auto manufacturers to stop putting the brakes on fuel efficiency. Japan and the European Union have fuel economy standards nearly twice as stringent as ours.

I know I'm just a mayor, but you don't have to run the State Department to know: China, Russia, and the other great manufacturing powers are not going to follow if we refuse to lead.

Mayors, I came here to Seattle, because I really do believe that we can make Los Angeles the cleanest and greenest big city in America. I believe together we can meet the challenge of global warming. I believe that cities need to lead the way.

But I believe we're going to have to be willing to change the way we do business. To be more creative. To assume a larger responsibility for our actions.

We're going to have to use our collective purchasing power to stimulate a greener economy. We're going to have to insist that there will be no growth that isn't green growth.

As a nation, we're going to need to rethink the balance of our investments in highways versus subways. I believe we're going to need to cast a vote for change in 2008.

And, Mayors, I believe we're going to need to demonstrate in the climate change debate that all politics are truly local. And that all workable solutions are possible only on a human scale.

Thank you so much for listening.

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