

# Colorado Should Set Bold Climate Change Goals

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The Colorado General Assembly soon will consider establishing additional climate goals for our state. The bill, HB19-1261, would set goals of a 50% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 and a 90% emissions reduction by 2050, both compared to 2005 levels. The bill also reaffirms the goal set by Gov. John Hickenlooper before he left office: a 26% emissions reduction by 2025.

While the new goals might sound ambitious, the Colorado Coalition for a Livable Climate (CCLC) is calling for the 2030 goal to be strengthened – instead of 50% reduction by 2030, the CCLC seeks a 63% reduction by then. This higher benchmark aligns with the best available science and would offer a better-than-even chance of limiting the average temperature rise to 1.5 degrees C (2.7 degree Fahrenheit) across the globe, if extended worldwide.

The report released last October by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) concludes planetary warming must not exceed 1.5 degrees C over the next 20 years. A half degree higher than that could be disastrous. A world that is warmer by 1.5 degrees C would see fewer extreme heat waves and resultant deaths, fewer extreme precipitation events and associated flooding, fewer extreme droughts and attendant forest fires and crop losses, lower sea level rise and associated inundation of coastal areas and islands, and the loss of fewer animal species compared to a world that is 2 degrees C (3.6 Fahrenheit) warmer.

HB19-1261 rightly acknowledges that global warming must be limited to 1.5 degrees C. Unfortunately, the greenhouse gas emissions-reduction goals outlined in the bill would NOT result in limiting the global average temperature rise to 1.5° if extended worldwide. Instead, they would result in the greater, 2 degree C global temperature rise. The reason: The emissions reductions are not enough. Some countries would have to cut them more than 63% by 2030 to keep warming to 1.5 degrees C. CCLC believes Colorado should be a good neighbor and share the burden equally with other states and countries. We believe this inconsistency in the bill should be swiftly addressed and remedied by adopting CCLC's goal of 63% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2030.

The existing goal for 2025 plus this more ambitious 2030 goal would put Colorado on a straight line path toward net-zero

greenhouse gas emissions by 2035. We recommend that the last emissions-reduction percentage we need to put us over the finish line – net-zero emissions – be set sometime over the next decade.

These cuts – extended worldwide – WOULD be likely to keep the global temperature rise to 1.5 degrees and thereby most adequately address the climate crisis. The CCLC developed these recommendations in conjunction with Scott Denning, Monfort Professor of Atmospheric Science at

Colorado State University. These recommendations align closely with those included in the October 2018 IPCC Report for a 66% probability of limiting global warming to 1.5 degrees C by the end of the 21st century.

HB19-1261 calls for Colorado to exercise “a leadership role” on climate, which would “position its economy, technology centers, financial institutions, and businesses to benefit from national and international efforts to reduce greenhouse gases.” The CCLC urges our legislators to establish a true climate leadership role for Colorado by adopting a bold 63% emissions reduction goal for 2030. Our children and future generations will thank them for doing their part to preserve a livable climate.

*Kevin Cross and Micah Parkin are spokespeople for the Colorado Coalition for a Livable Climate. The CCLC develops and advocates strategies for reducing Colorado’s GHG emissions to levels supportive of a livable climate, and is comprised of 26 member organizations located throughout the State of Colorado.*