

ONE HUNDRED SEVENTH LEGISLATURE

FIRST SESSION

LEGISLATIVE RESOLUTION 102

Introduced by Wishart, 27; Blood, 3; Brandt, 32; Cavanaugh, J., 9; Cavanaugh, M., 6; DeBoer, 10; Hansen, M., 26; Hunt, 8; Lathrop, 12; McCollister, 20; McKinney, 11; Morfeld, 46; Pahls, 31; Pansing Brooks, 28; Vargas, 7; Walz, 15; Wayne, 13.

WHEREAS, according to a warning published on November 5, 2019, about the effects of climate change, signed and supported by over eleven thousand scientists, the climate crisis "is more severe than anticipated, threatening natural ecosystems and the fate of humanity." Later in the statement, the scientists state that "climate chain reactions could cause significant disruptions to ecosystems, society, and economies, potentially making large areas of Earth uninhabitable", and that because of the climate crisis, humanity will face "untold suffering"; and

WHEREAS, the United States Environmental Protection Agency states that intense weather phenomena, including large storms and heat waves, are likely to occur more frequently because of the climate and ecological crisis. Major storms lead to a loss of property, and both storms and heat waves may lead to death; and

WHEREAS, the Fourth National Climate Assessment states that over time these heat waves increase drought and wildfire risks. Such heat waves and droughts have accelerated the depletion of water supplies, contributing to approximately ten billion dollars in losses to agriculture; and

WHEREAS, according to the Union of Concerned Scientists, many forests are catching fire during wildfire seasons due to changes in temperature, precipitation levels, and soil moisture resulting from global warming. Hotter temperatures in the spring and summer and the fact that snow is melting earlier in the spring are likely to cause longer wildfire seasons and cause wildfires to be more intense and burn for longer; and

WHEREAS, according to the National Centers for Environmental Information,

which is part of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, there were eleven major wildfires between 2000 and 2017 in the United States of America. In that eighteen-year period, both the number of deaths and the financial damage caused by each wildfire dramatically increased. In the first wildfire of 2000, no one died, and the cost was 1.6 billion dollars. In the last wildfire of 2017, fifty-four people died, and the cost was 18.7 billion dollars; and

WHEREAS, due to warmer land temperatures in northern latitudes, more warm air is being pushed north, which is disrupting the polar vortex. Because of this, arctic air is sometimes pushed further south than normal, causing cold snaps. In February of 2021, many Midwestern and Southern states experienced a cold snap with record low temperatures that led to millions of individuals losing electricity, millions of dollars in damages, and at least 58 deaths; and

WHEREAS, in analyzing the Great Plains, a 2014 report by the University of Nebraska Lincoln states, "The region frequently experiences a wide range of weather and climate hazards such as tornadoes, droughts, floods, and other severe weather events that result in significant economic losses and stresses to a fragile ecosystem. Climate change will further exacerbate those stresses and increase economic losses in the future.". The report also predicts that Nebraska will experience between thirteen and twenty-five more 100-degree days per year in coming years; and

WHEREAS, the Fourth National Climate Assessment also states that flooding might increase across the United States of America, including in areas where precipitation is expected to decrease. All flood types, including flash floods, urban flooding, river flooding, and coastal flooding, are, to different degrees, affected by the climate. Therefore, the risks from future floods are major; and

WHEREAS, according to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, sea levels are rising at a rate of about one-eighth of an inch per year. The two major causes of rising global sea levels are oceanic expansions due to the warming of oceans and increased melting of glaciers and ice sheets. The oceans

are absorbing about ninety percent of the increased atmospheric heat that comes from human emissions. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration goes on to state that "with continued ocean and atmospheric warming, sea levels will likely rise for many centuries at rates higher than that of the current century"; and

WHEREAS, higher sea levels cause deadly and destructive storm surges to push farther inland, which means there will be more nuisance flooding, which is estimated to be three hundred to nine hundred percent more frequent in United States coastal communities than it was fifty years ago. Nearly forty percent of the population of the United States lives in such coastal communities. According to the U.N. Atlas of the Oceans, eight out of the ten largest cities in the world are close to a coast; and

WHEREAS, according to a 2014 report published by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, animals have an increased risk of extinction because of the climate crisis; and

WHEREAS, a report by the University of Nebraska-Lincoln assessed that disruptions in the climate have decreased agricultural yields in Nebraska over the last forty years and are predicted to decrease agricultural yields significantly over the next twenty-five years; and

WHEREAS, the State of Nebraska has contributed to the climate crisis, but has done little to nothing to slow the effects.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE MEMBERS OF THE ONE HUNDRED SEVENTH LEGISLATURE OF NEBRASKA, FIRST SESSION:

1. That the Legislature acknowledges that we are in the middle of a climate and ecological crisis caused by humans.

2. That the Legislature has a moral obligation to take steps to combat the climate and ecological crisis.