

Ours to Embrace



Between January 20th and 27th, 2021, the 47th President of the United States signed seven directives all bearing on climate change, science, environmental justice and economic issues. This wave of action imperatives charged all federal agencies to play their historic and constitutional role in helping the States, local and Tribal governments deal with these issues from a federal collective approach. “Collectively the seven directives are a strong reaffirmation of the constructive importance of government. Government is a necessary means of addressing certain sorts of problems and helping people. President Biden has moved more rapidly and forcefully on environmental issues than any recent U.S. president,” so says Ken Payne, president of the Civic Alliance for a Cooler Rhode Island. The implications for Rhode Island set in motion decisions that could add jobs and boost the economy while saving the environment, addressing environmental justice and dealing with the climate crisis. But if Rhode Island leaders at all levels ignore the invitation and the directives, Rhode Island could be left behind. On April 12, 2021, the Civic Alliance for a Cooler Rhode Island sponsored **Ours to Embrace: Climate Federalism** *The implication for Rhode island of four Biden Executive Orders, a presidential memorandum and two Fact sheets of January 2021* The hour long symposium brought scholars, agency heads, advocates together to discuss what Rhode Island must do to take advantage of Biden’s agenda. Many governmental entities take their direction from Federal authority. The Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management, for example, performs functions on the basis of delegated authority from the Feds. And they receive funds and support for their work. “With Biden’s directives and given the full weight of the Federal government, Rhode Island could benefit significantly from down-stream impacts. But its up to us. There is no longer an option of continuing business as usual. Doing business as usual puts us on a trajectory to severely worsening conditions,” Ken Payne says. The symposium is directed towards legislators, government leaders, agency and department heads. But Biden’s executive orders has implications for all levels of government and activists. Executive Order 14008 in Section 219, in particular elevates environmental justice to the White House level and gives power to

State's attorney generals for taking action. It specifies that the Attorney General shall...*ensure comprehensive attention to environmental justice* throughout the Department of Justice...and coordinate environmental justice activities among Department of Justice components *and United States Attorneys' Offices nationwide*. "This is not your typical environmental policy directive," so says Paul A. Roselli, secretary of the Civic Alliance for a Cooler Rhode Island and organizer for the April 12th event. "Our goal is to jump start this conversation. We should not underestimate how transformational Climate Federalism will look in 10 years. It's taken nearly 7 years of hard work in moving the RI legislature to enact the Act on Climate legislation. Biden's executive orders gives us a small window of opportunity. Waiting or doing nothing is no longer a viable option." Panelists included: **Ken Payne**, Co-convenor and President of the Civic Alliance for a Cooler Rhode Island; Former administrator of the RI Office of Energy Resources, former Senior Policy Advisor to the Rhode Island Senate and Director of the Rhode Island Senate Policy Office; **Sue AnderBois** - Climate & Energy program manager, The Rhode Island Chapter of the Nature Conservancy; **Timmons Roberts**, Institute at Brown for Environment and Society; **Barry Rabe**, Gerald R. Ford School of Public Policy, University of Michigan at Ann Arbor; and **Curt Spalding**, Institute at Brown for Environment and Society, former USEPA New England Region 1 Administrator, and former Save The Bay's Executive Director. The symposium was recorded and the video recording is available [HERE](#). Documents that help support the findings of Ken Payne are located within this web site. The Civic Alliance for a Cooler Rhode Island is a Rhode Island grassroots all volunteer organization which assesses, informs, and activates efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in or attributable to Rhode Island.

Ours to Embrace - Ken PayneDownload

Biden's fact sheet: President Biden Takes Executive Actions to Tackle the Climate Crisis at Home and Abroad, Create Jobs, and Restore Scientific Integrity Across Federal GovernmentDownload

Fact Sheet: List of Agency Actions for ReviewDownload

President's Council of Advisors on Science and TechnologyDownload

Protecting Public Health and the Environment and Restoring Science To Tackle the Climate CrisisDownload

Tackling the Climate Crisis at Home and AbroadDownload

Civic Alliance for a Cooler Rhode Island releases 2020 assessment of RI's Executive Climate Change Coordinating Council.



Citizen evaluation of government agency performance is vital to meaningful democracy. The body politic needs to look objectively at the work done by public agencies, applaud what has been done well, and point to things that are needed to advance the commonweal and to secure constitutional guarantees, including those pertaining to justice, liberty, and natural system viability. The conditions of climate change call for such civic activism in our state. The following assessment is offered in this sense of public duty.

You can access a copy of the assessment [here](#).[Download](#)

Assessing Rhode Island's EC4:

Moving Beyond Business As Usual



On the heels of the fifth anniversary of enacting the Resilient Rhode Island Act (Act) and the creation of the Executive Climate Change Coordinating Council (EC4), The Civic Alliance for a Cooler Rhode Island (CACRI) has released an assessment on the progress of the Act and the need to update the EC4.

“Now is the time to assess the current situation in preparation to make adjustments and amendments to our one state agency and public law that is responsible for the reduction of RI’s greenhouse gas emissions,” says Ken Payne – former Senior Policy Advisor to the Rhode Island Senate and Director of the Rhode Island Senate Policy Office from 1997 to 2007, and the author of the assessment.

The assessment illustrates, in part, that while the EC4 has done an outstanding job in basic respects, several key provisions of the Act have not been utilized to date, and the EC4 needs to be updated to provide:

- enforceable targets with new powers of implementation need to be established for greenhouse gas emissions reductions;
- a study of carbon pricing as a means to incentivize change needs to be initiated and completed; and,
- best available science and technical information in evaluating the state’s policies and programs needs to be used.

“Has the Act served a useful purpose, and should it be continued? Does the Act need amendment or revision? 2020 is the year in which we will have to evaluate whether or not we have met our first greenhouse gas emissions reduction target. Whatever the conclusion, the recent news regarding the need for emissions reductions has not been good. The need for greater emission reductions is much more pressing if we are to

avoid a local economic collapse and a global cataclysm,” says Ken Payne.

Download:

- CACRI EC4 Assessment 12-17-2018 [pdf]

News coverage:

- Civic Assessment Of Resilient RI Act Finds State Needs To Do More To Address Climate Change [RI NPR]
- ‘We must move beyond business as usual,’ says new report on Rhode Island’s inadequate response to climate change [UpriseRI]
- New Report Claims R.I. Climate Council Falling Behind Targets [ecoRI news]
- Civic Alliance for a Cooler RI Releases Assessment of Climate Change Act [GoLocalProv]

A guide by Rhode Islanders, for Rhode Islanders



CACRI, the Civic Alliance for a Cooler Rhode Island, welcomes you to the Livable RI guide!

We are a group of Rhode Island citizen volunteers who are concerned about the coming impacts of climate change on our state’s people, places, and things we love.

Please start by reading our introductory articles on why we've written this manual. Then help us by sharing this guide with your friends, family, and social groups to spread the word. By working together, we will build better relationships with each other and with our environment, making Rhode Island more livable for all of us.