Colorado Communities for Climate Action Highlights

October 2019

Colorado Communities for Climate Action is a coalition of 29 counties and municipalities across Colorado advocating for effective state climate policy. Our members span the Western Slope and Front Range; small rural towns and major suburbs; counties and municipalities; and wealthy, middle income, and low-income neighborhoods.

New members over the past year include Avon, Breckenridge, Erie, Dillon, Fraser, Longmont, Northglenn, and Ridgway. Representing one-seventh of all Coloradans, and with rural Western Slope communities making up two-thirds of the membership, CC4CA has become an impactful voice for clean air, climate action, and public health protection.

Legislative Successes

As an increasingly influential organization at the Capitol, CC4CA regularly meets with state legislators, is regularly invited to testify at legislative hearings, and played a highly consequential role on climate-related legislation during the 2019 session:

• CC4CA actively supported thirteen bills tackling carbon pollution in the 2019 legislative session. By providing compelling testimony from our local elected officials and local government staff, publishing guest opinion pieces in newspapers around the state, and meeting frequently with legislators, we helped pass every one of these bills as stand-alone legislation or incorporated into other bills.

• CC4CA led the successful effort to pass Senator Donovan’s greenhouse gas inventory bill, coordinating political and coalition strategy, generating substantial support from local elected officials, and providing key legislative testimony.

• CC4CA played an important role in the successful coalition effort to codify statewide greenhouse gas goals. This marquis legislation established aggressive emissions goals and directed the Air Quality Control Commission to adopt regulations for achieving those goals.

• CC4CA helped defeat the one bill it actively opposed, legislation that would have rolled back Colorado’s newly adopted “low emission vehicle” standards and prevented adoption of the “zero emission vehicle” standards now under consideration.

• CC4CA effectively leveraged the power of local government voices – which bring particular concerns and perspectives to the table – throughout the legislative session with legislators and the governor’s office. The results have the potential to be transformative: the PUC will incorporate a social cost of carbon into its analyses, key Tri-State decisions will now fall under PUC oversight, tools for ensuring that all of
Colorado benefits from EV deployment, sweeping Air Quality Control Commission authority to adopt rules that enable Colorado to meet its new carbon pollution goals, and more.

**Advanced Clean Car Standards**

In an ongoing effort that began early in 2018, CC4CA played a key role in securing two critical Colorado Air Quality Control Commission decisions:

- CC4CA led an energetic effort by local governments to persuade Governor Hickenlooper to consider adopting “low emission vehicle” standards, and then played a central role in the Commission’s decision late last year to actually adopt them. These standards, which twelve other states have also adopted, will protect Colorado from the EPA’s planned weakening of federal emissions standards.

- CC4CA also worked hard – successfully – to persuade the Air Quality Control Commission to begin a rulemaking process for the so-called “zero emission vehicle” standards, designed to substantially expand electric vehicle opportunities in Colorado. And we played a lead role in the effort to persuade the AQCC to actually adopt these standards, which they did in August. As a result, electric vehicles will become more affordable and Coloradans will have dramatically improved access to the full range of electric vehicle models on the market, including SUVs, crossovers, and trucks. These standards will also help ensure that all of Colorado – rural and Front Range alike – will fully benefit from the spread of electric vehicles.

CC4CA and its coalition partners in this effort are now focused on ensuring that these standards are effectively implemented.

**Pushing for Strong Executive Branch Policies and Programs**

CC4CA helped secure a critical Public Utilities Commission decision in February 2019 that gives many of our members a better chance at being able to expand their use of renewable energy. CC4CA began establishing a credible presence at the PUC last year, testifying in support of Xcel Energy’s proposed plan to retire early coal-fired power plants and invest instead in renewable sources.

CC4CA is working closely with the Governor’s staff, the Colorado Energy Office, the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment, and other state agencies to reduce Colorado’s carbon emissions and better prepare for the local community impacts of climate change.

The new governor’s cabinet and senior staff appointments include a number of CC4CA’s local elected officials, including the new director of the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment, who relinquished her positions as an Eagle County Commissioner and CC4CA President in order to take on the new role. The coalition has already built a reputation as a knowledgeable and trusted player.
Training Members for Effective Advocacy

Over the past 18 months CC4CA conducted four well-attended regional training sessions around the state for elected officials, managers, and program staff of member jurisdictions. The sessions armed attendees with information and tools to more effectively represent CC4CA and their own local governments in state and federal climate advocacy.

CC4CA also ensures that its members – local elected officials and local government staff – have the opportunity to serve as witnesses during legislative hearings, meet with their legislators, testify during agency rulemaking processes, speak to reporters, and publish opinion pieces in local and statewide media outlets.

In the past year alone, forty CC4CA representatives have testified in legislative and rulemaking hearings, CC4CA has been quoted at least 18 times in news coverage, three dozen of our local elected officials and staff have published guest opinion pieces, we have met with legislators and members of the governor’s team many dozens of times, and coordinated with dozens of other stakeholder groups.

Building Strategic Relationships

CC4CA continues to build constructive relationships at multiple levels. For instance:

- We offered every gubernatorial candidate from both major parties last year an opportunity to meet and learn about CC4CA and the climate-oriented concerns of our local government members. The candidates we ended up briefing included the new governor and helped us establish a strong relationship from the very beginning of his term.

- Similarly, CC4CA maintains communication with every member of Colorado’s Congressional delegation representing CC4CA members, and CC4CA members have been meeting systematically meeting with these Senators, Representatives, and their staff members.

- CC4CA communicates and meets regularly with members of the governor’s cabinet, his senior team, and other key agency staff.

- CC4CA maintains a strong working relationship with other organizations representing local government interests, including the Colorado Municipal League and Counties & Commissioners Acting Together (CCAT).

In just four years, Colorado Communities for Climate Action has evolved from an interesting idea into an influential coalition shaping state climate policy. It can be very difficult for individual local governments to influence state policy on their own, but our coalition of more than two dozen local governments all speaking with one voice is having an outsized impact.

For more information:
Jacob Smith • jsmith@cc4ca.org • (303) 810-6017 • CC4CA.org