

Schools for Climate Action

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Encouraged by Youth Activists Third Local School Board Speaks Up for Climate Action to Protect Current and Future Students

First Carbon Pricing Mention by School Board in the Nation?

On Thursday, February 1, 2018, the Trustees of the Sonoma County Office of Education (SCOE) unanimously passed [Resolution #17-18-15 “Commitment to Climate Change Action”](#). Fourteen-year old Lola Guthrie of Sebastopol spoke during public comment period, stating “as a member of a generation that will bear a great burden of climate change, it makes me really optimistic to see adults taking action and breaking the spiral of silence around climate change.”

The resolution recognizes climate change as a “human issue” and states that the urgency and magnitude of climate change requires leadership from “all leaders and all institutions”. Furthermore, the resolution states that “elected leaders working in a bipartisan fashion to enact carbon pricing policies could substantially reduce or eliminate net human-made greenhouse gas emissions, thereby protecting our current and future students.” This may be the first official mention about carbon pricing as a policy tool by any school board in the nation. Sonoma County Office of Education may also be the first County Board of Education in the nation to encourage “local school districts to engage in non-partisan advocacy and engagement with local, state, and federal jurisdictions advocating for reducing the impacts of greenhouse gas emissions.”

Other parts of this resolution echo the recent Sebastopol Union School District and Ross Valley School District Resolutions. Dr. Herrington, Superintendent of Sonoma County Schools stated in the board meeting that he prepared the SCOE resolution working from a draft of the Sebastopol Union School District resolution.

A youth-adult team with the Schools for Climate Action campaign met with SCOE Board President Herman G. Hernandez on 1.25.18 to discuss a proposed climate change resolution. Nevin W.-S. a junior at CREDO High School in Rohnert Park appreciated Mr. Hernandez’s enthusiasm, encouragement, and commitment to bring a climate change resolution forward.

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There are 14,000 school boards in the country with roughly 90,000 school board members. To date, Schools for Climate Action has found [eight school boards](#) consisting of about 40 school board members who have spoken up for action to address climate change as a children's issue or to protect students. Schools for Climate Action notices a disconnect between school board discourse about climate change and the magnitude of the lifetime risk of harm due to climate change that current and future students will face. Schools for Climate Action believes there may be a [spiral of silence](#) effect at work. "School board members like those Trustees of Sonoma County Office of Education and the Sebastopol Union and Ross Valley school districts help break the spiral of silence on climate change and drive a paradigm shift that may help build public will for science-based climate policies to protect all children. Conversely, silence about the fact that climate change is a generational justice issue may be dangerous and may diminish the possibilities and quality of life of current and future students. As the only elected leaders with a singular focus on the well-being and future success of children, all 90,000 school board members in the nation can speak up," explained Park Guthrie, a 6th grade teacher and Schools for Climate Action co-founder. "Passing climate change resolutions helps close feedback loops between those who nurture our children (schools and school leaders) and those who create climate policy (Members of Congress and state legislatures). If enough school boards speak up about generational climate justice like Sebastopol Union School District, Ross Valley School District, and now Sonoma County Office of Education have done, this great nation may yet be able to muster our creativity, knowledge, and resources to address the issue in a swift and effective manner."

Schools for Climate Action is a non-partisan, grassroots, volunteer campaign started by a group of students, parents, and teachers in western Sonoma. They have a mission to empower school boards to speak up for climate action in order to protect current and future students. Currently, there are Schools for Climate Action supporters working on local school board climate resolutions in more than 12 public school districts and independent schools in California. In addition, there are Schools for Climate Action supporters working on climate change resolutions in public school districts in Ohio and Colorado.

For more information about [Schools for Climate Action](#), please contact Park Guthrie at park.guthrie.jr@gmail.com or (510) 691-5051 or visit our website at www.schoolsforclimateaction.weebly.com

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