



Speaking of Climate Change... Local Discussions to Share Information, Spur Action

By Rick Keller

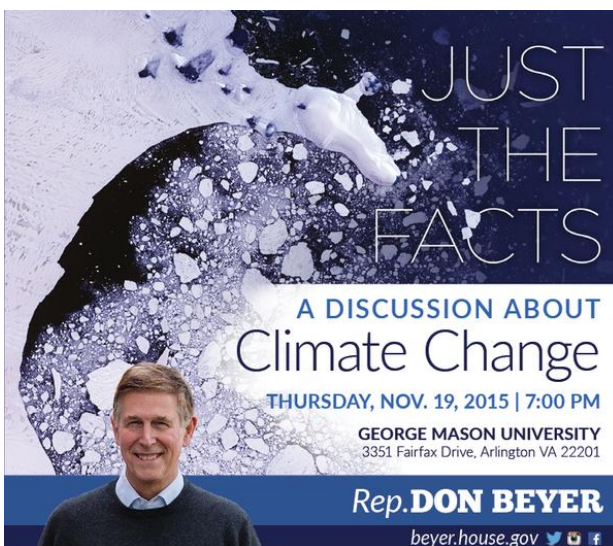
This fall, Mount Vernon Group members joined other interested citizens in two local discussions about climate change.

On November 19, more than 200 people attended a forum organized by Congressman Don Beyer (D-8th) at George Mason University's Founders Hall in Arlington. The impressive panel included Megan Ceronsky, Senior Policy Advisor in the White House Office of Energy and Climate Change; Shawn Garvin, Regional Administrator for this district of the EPA; Mona Sarfaty, Director of the Program on Climate and Health, GMU; and Aliya Haq, Climate Change Special Projects Director for the Natural Resources Defense Council.

Congressman Beyer opened by sharing his belief that we have to take partisanship out of the climate discussion in order to tackle the issue effectively, and encouraged both short-term and long-term policies and actions. Ceronsky discussed the White House's commitment to the Climate Action Plan and the Clean Power Plan. Garvin spoke about the work in this region to combat emissions, including steps taken by local governments in Arlington and the City of Alexandria. Sarfaty focused on public health impacts from pollutants generated by the burning of fossil fuels. Finally, Haq debunked criticisms of the Kyoto Protocol, citing the lack of U.S. participation in the outcome, and said that the U.S. must lead in Paris.

There was a great deal of participation from the audience. Attendees appreciated the panelists' arguments for clean energy (renewables), specifically how it benefits the economy--for example, the growing number of people working in the solar industry, which now outnumbers those employed as coal miners.

Earlier in November, Arlingtonians for a Clean Environment sponsored a forum at the Arlington Central Library to explore how climate change is affecting local communities and how individual citizens and community groups can work toward solutions. The keynote speaker was Andrea McGimsey from the Climate Reality Project. Ms. McGimsey's presentation included both facts on global climate change



along with photos and videos from around the world demonstrating impacts. Other speakers shared how local organizations are working to curb the effects of climate change. Included were our own Seth Heald (MVG ExCom member and the Vice Chair of the Virginia Chapter), Eric Goplerud from the Faith Alliance for Climate Solutions (FACS), Monica Billger of the Audubon Naturalist Society, and a representative from the Citizens Climate Lobby, among others. More on the Climate Reality Project may be found at <https://www.climaterealityproject.org/>

This content originally appeared in the December 2015 issue of the Mount Vernon Sierran, the Mount Vernon Group's quarterly newsletter. Image credit: Rep. Don Byer. Opinions expressed in this article are the author's and do not necessarily reflect official positions of the Mount Vernon Group or the Sierra Club. For more information about the Mount Vernon Group, please visit virginia.sierraclub.org/mvg/.