

Rep. Brindisi Environmental Advisory Committee

Meeting Summary

by Valdi Weiderpass

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On February 19, 2020, eleven members of Representative Anthony Brindisi's Environmental

Advisory Committee (EAC) met at Mohawk Valley Community College for their third meeting. I

volunteer on the committee and attended the meeting to help Rep. Brindisi (NY Congressional

District #22) learn about how to best protect the environment and Save a Habitable Climate.

Rep. Brindisi highlighted the work he has done including co-sponsoring several environmental

bills, two of which passed the House of Representatives:

- H.R.9, the Climate Action Now Act. would require the President to develop and update annually a plan for the United States to meet its Paris Climate Agreement commitments.
- H.R.1225, the Restore Our Parks and Public Lands Act would establish a fund that reinvests revenue from energy development into restoring national parks.

Sadly, both of these bills are stalled in the Senate by Republican opposition.

Four work groups presented suggestions for addressing Climate Change and its effect on the

environment. To summarize:

Climate Resilience

- Focus on preparedness for floods and other climate related issues
- Potentially convene a Preparedness Summit conference (or multiple) for NY22
- Create an inventory of entities and groups working on preparedness
- Highlight NY's designated Climate Smart Communities and their programs

Education, Communication and Workforce Development

- Refer to the 'CLIMATE CRISIS' and 'CLIMATE EMERGENCY' in messaging rather than

'global warming.'

- Point to recent extreme flooding events and emergencies (e.g. Halloween Storm) as the

manifestation of the climate crisis in NY 22.

- Talk about 'climate justice' a 'just transition' and 'frontline communities.'
- Talk about the 2019 New York State Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act,

which is nation-leading in ambition.

- Communicate that the renewable energy transition is happening, that renewable sources of

electricity have become cheaper, and that fossil fuels have been heavily subsidized.

- Highlight when recent regulatory rollbacks have negative environmental impacts and no

longer protect the clean air and clean water.

- Have Congressman host specialist presentations and speaking events on key climate issues

in-District that include and feature EAC members.

- Climate in central New York is becoming both warmer and wetter with more frequent extreme rainfall events and more variable winter weather (so-called “whiplash weather”).
- Job training for renewable energy, climate smart heating (air- and ground-source heat pumps)

Sustainable Agriculture

- Help develop strategies to move toward more sustainable farming: produce solar and/or

wind power on farms, use biodigesters, reduce pollution from farms.

- Have Congressman connect with FFA and 4H groups to highlight best practices; connection

between climate and farming, encourage organic farming, buying local, regenerative agriculture to sequester carbon in soil.

Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency

A) Support legislation and funding bills that promote renewable energy and discourage fossil

fuels

- Thanked Congressman for supporting H.R. 2986; Better Energy Storage Act
- Encourage sponsoring H.R. 763; Energy Innovation and Carbon Dividend Act to impose

a fee on carbon at point of extraction and rebate the revenue back to citizens in monthly dividends

- Utilize tax breaks to favor renewables/efficiency: solar, wind, geothermal heat pumps, air-source heat pumps, and energy storage systems, etc. (e.g. HR 5185: Green New Deal

for Public Housing Act).

- Oppose new fossil fuel extraction, new pipelines, and efforts to use natural gas as a bridge fuel. Support H.R. 436 - Fracking Disclosure and Safety Act as well as a House version of S.3247 - Fracking Ban Act.

- Support strict regulations on transportation of all types of natural gas across state lines by train and truck.

- Support strict EPA regulations and enforcement to protect public from adverse health and environmental effects of fossil fuels

B) Develop and Enhance the Infrastructure and Public Support Needed for a Clean Energy

Economy

- Promote more federal funding and regulatory/policy changes to encourage and enable building an expanded smart electrical grid powered by renewables. Need to double the electrical generation capacity to electrify the transportation sector which requires:

- adequate electrical grid scale storage

- distributed generation and storage, including use of home/business-based battery and other types of energy storage, (include EV batteries)

- Advance EV charging infrastructure development to support all electric vehicles and the

electrification of railroads.

- Provide federal monies to rural farm towns that are being asked to carry the burden of hosting large solar arrays and wind farms to provide clean electricity for distant cities.

During the productive discussion, I was heartened to hear Representative Brindisi say that he

understands the flooding along the Great Lakes shores is due to rising lake levels caused by

increased precipitation from Climate Change which is overtaking the ability of lake outflow

management to control. I note here that lake levels are also occasionally raised by rapid snow

melt from warm spells accompanied by rain which is made more common due to Climate

Change.