

# SUN DAY CAMPAIGN

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## SUSTAINABLE ENERGY STUDY #2

Tackling Global Warming at the Local Level - U.S. Cities Are Struggling to Meet Greenhouse Gas Emissions Targets:

Institute for Local Self-Reliance, January 10, 2007

<http://www.newrules.org/de/archives/000150.html>

The January 2007 report, "Lessons from the Pioneers: Tackling Global Warming at the Local Level" by the Institute for Local Self-Reliance (ILSR), looks at ten of the most visible and successful cities involved in global warming solutions and finds that reducing GHG emissions below 1990 levels will be a major challenge. Many cities will likely not meet their goals unless complementary state and federal policies are put in place very soon.

As of early January 2007, 355 mayors in communities representing over 54 million Americans in 49 states have signed the U.S. Mayor's Climate Protection Agreement (formalized in June 2005). Participating cities agree to reduce community-wide greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by 2012 to at least 7 percent below 1990 levels. The number of communities involved promises a diversity of strategies and a steep learning curve as communities learn from one another what works, and what doesn't work.

ILSR is very supportive of the U.S. Mayor's initiative and encourages other cities to join the effort if they are fully committed to the challenge (see <http://www.seattle.gov/mayor/climate/> for information on how to sign on)

ILSR surveyed the climate change activities in 10 cities to find out how well these "Kyoto cities" were doing in meeting their goals and what strategies and methodologies they were using. The overriding conclusion is that, despite their commitment and their elaboration of significant programs, reducing GHG emissions below 1990 levels will be a major challenge. Many cities will likely fail in their attempts to meet their goals unless complementary state and federal policies are put in place. Our findings include:

The methodologies and assumptions used to create GHG inventories differ among communities, making comparisons between cities problematic. Convenient access to the data was sometimes lacking. A standard GHG estimation methodology is not yet in place, but useable models exist. Convergence and standardization may come soon. Transparency of assumptions is critical.

In all cities, community-wide emissions have risen since 1990, sometimes dramatically. Based on progress to date, it is unlikely that more than one or two of our ten cities and quite possibly

none, will reduce their GHG emissions seven percent below 1990 levels by 2012. Overall emissions increases ranged from 6.5 percent to 27 percent from 1990 baseline measurements. An exception was Portland, Oregon, which reports a tiny 0.7 percent increase above the 1990 baseline.

Almost all of the cities we surveyed were expecting to realize a significant portion of their GHG reductions as a result of actions taken by higher levels of government (e.g. a state-level renewable portfolio standard or an increase in federal fuel economy standards). Relying too heavily on strategies out of the city's direct control could stunt creative local solutions and inhibit the city's investments in energy-related projects that have ancillary economic and environmental benefits.

Cities are not investing significant amounts of their own money to reduce GHG emissions. This may be understandable, given tight budgets, but cities should remember that energy-related investments, unlike many public investments, repay themselves, often in relatively short time frames.

The full 17-page report can be downloaded at <http://www.newrules.org/de/pioneers.pdf>