



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS®  
OF NEBRASKA

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The year 2016 was the warmest on record, and my latest OPPD bill shows that average high and low temps in January 2017 were 5-6 degrees warmer than the same month last year. Here in Nebraska, heat waves are becoming more frequent and intense, putting our agricultural economy at risk. More frequent severe rainstorms are overwhelming storm sewers and causing flooding. Warmer temperatures and changing precipitation patterns are affecting water availability. The League of Women Voters of the US recognizes that “The magnitude of the climate change will be determined by the choices we as a society make about future emissions. Through our mitigation efforts — the actions we take to reduce emissions of Greenhouse Gases .... and increase the removal of CO<sub>2</sub> from the atmosphere — we can limit future warming and minimize future impacts.” Extreme weather is a symptom of climate change, and a comprehensive state plan that finds mitigation tactics for the symptoms as well as strategy for reducing the threat is needed without delay. Indeed, the bi-partisan special committee authorized by LR455 last year recommended unanimously that the Legislature create a state climate action plan.

The University of Nebraska has world-class researchers, educators, facilities and the expertise to fully explore and develop a Climate Action Plan for Nebraska. A legislative committee, while well-intended, will not have the range of experience, scientific knowledge and outreach capability that is possessed in our Universities and colleges. This option will require funding, but would be less expensive than hiring an outside consultant, and certainly, as stated in the UN-L report, *Understanding and Assessing Climate Change* “action now is preferable and more cost-effective than reaction later.”

One example of the financial cost of climate change is the 500,000 acres of forest and grassland burned in 2012 at a cost of \$12 million. The 2011 Missouri flooding cost Nebraska \$400 million per the Omaha World Herald. The 2012 drought and subsequent decrease in forage through 2014 exceeded \$887 million in loss to livestock producers. While not all of these losses may be preventable, better planning for future extremes of weather related to changing climate are prudent.

A climate action plan would outline best practices in energy production, transportation infrastructure, industry and agriculture. A Nebraska plan would focus on development of Nebraska’s own resources, our own unique system of water management, and our agriculture-based economy. There are opportunities in new fuel sources and emerging technologies for carbon capture and conservation. Public-private partnerships already in place within the University system are ideal for this type of work. The League of Women Voters of Nebraska supports a climate action plan that involves the University of Nebraska in the process.

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