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1,000 U.S. Mayors Have Signed Climate Protection Pledge

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SEATTLE, Washington, September 30, 2009 (ENS) - U.S. Conference of Mayors President Seattle Mayor Greg Nickels says that by Friday, 1,000 mayors, representing 85 million Americans, will have signed the U.S. Conference of Mayors' Climate Protection Agreement since it was introduced in February 2005.

The announcement of the 1,000th mayoral signatory and his or her city will take place during the Conference's Leadership Meeting, from October 1-3 in Seattle, where more than 60 U.S. mayors will discuss the continuing recession and "green" economic recovery with White House and Obama Cabinet Officials.

At their Leadership Meeting Thursday, the mayors will release a Climate Protection City Profile report that outlines specific actions mayors are taking to make their cities more energy efficient and meet the goals of the Mayors' Climate Protection Agreement.

Mayor Nickels initially introduced the Mayors' Climate Protection Agreement in response to federal inaction on the Kyoto Protocol. He has since led mayors in the "green" movement in



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Seattle Mayor Greg Nickels (Photo courtesy Office of the Mayor)

this country with two summits in 2006 on alternative vehicles and green buildings and another summit on climate change in 2007.

Nickels will lead a delegation of mayors supporting Secretary of

State Hillary Clinton and President Barack Obama at the Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen in December.

The mayors said they welcome the new climate change legislation introduced by Senate Democrats today.

Trenton, New Jersey Mayor Douglas Palmer, who is a past president of the U.S. Conference of Mayors, issued a statement on behalf of all the nation's mayors, saying, "We are especially pleased that the Senate has responded to our request that the bill include a provision for the Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant."

"By doing this, these Senate leaders are acknowledging the important role cities play in creating green jobs and achieving energy independence and climate protection," Palmer said. "The Conference has worked long and hard to establish this innovative program as a cornerstone of our national climate protection strategy."

Over \$2.7 billion in formula grants are now available to U.S. states, territories, local governments, and Indian tribes under the Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant Program, funded for the first time under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009.

To date, the Department of Energy has awarded more than 1,200 Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grants, totaling over \$1.4 billion.

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"In these hard economic times, we know that many people are without jobs and are struggling. This bill will help jump start new green industries that will create new jobs at a time when they are desperately needed," Mayor Palmer said. "These green jobs are the future of our economic competitiveness."

"The nation's mayors know that a successful plan in this country for reducing our energy consumption and promoting greater energy independence begins in cities and other local communities," Palmer said. "Mayors are leading by example in the fight against global warming. We urge the Senate to swiftly act to address this global crisis."

Mayor Nickels has made cleaner transportation a priority since his took office in 2002, beginning with the city's own fleet of hybrid electric cars and trucks and continuing with a new light rail system. In 2008, the City of Seattle began a pilot project to test plug-in hybrid electric cars.



These eTec charging stations will soon be installed throughout Seattle. (Photo courtesy Office of the Mayor)

In August, Nickels announced that under a \$99.8 million federal grant, Seattle will be one of four cities to be fitted with a

total of 2,550 charging systems for electric vehicles. The charging station network, to be installed by Electric Transportation Engineering Corporation, or eTec, will enable drivers to use electric vehicles throughout the region with the security of knowing a charging station is nearby.

"This news heralds the end of the filling station and the beginning of the era of the charging station," said Nickels. "We are going to be leaders in converting our transportation from oil to electricity."

Nickels and Nissan North America signed an agreement last April to make Seattle one of the first markets to introduce Nissan's LEAF, a zero-emission, all-electric car in October 2010. According to Nissan, the LEAF will go 100 miles on a single charge and be priced in the range of a typical family sedan.

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At current Seattle electricity rates, the Nissan LEAF would cost about \$190 to drive 10,000 miles, or just under two cents a mile. Under the federal grant, purchasers of the Nissan vehicle who participate in the program will be offered a 220-volt charging station in their home at no cost.

A unique aspect of the program will offer the general public the ability to test drive and use advanced technology vehicles. Zipcar, the world's largest car sharing service, is a partner in the eTec program. Zipcar and the city of Seattle will make electric vehicles in the Zipcar Seattle fleet available by the hour to city employees and the general public.

Mayor Nickels is taking these steps because he is convinced that greenhouse gas emissions pose a danger to Seattle and to the nation.

Testifying before a U.S. EPA hearing in Seattle in May, Nickels cited a study by the University of Washington's Climate Impacts Group that estimates the average warming rate in the Pacific Northwest will be a half-degree per decade, more than two-and-a-half times the rate experienced throughout the 20th century.

"This pace will significantly impact our ecological systems by mid-century," the mayor said. "For our mountains, this change translates into a 38-46 percent reduction in annual snow-pack statewide by 2040. Such a dramatic change will disrupt our hydropower system, which provides 70 percent of our region's electricity. Simply put, we will face an energy crisis of historic proportions."

Washington state's \$100 million shellfish industry is endangered by greenhouse gas emissions that are making the ocean more acidic, Mayor Nickels said.

"As a coastal region, our businesses, residents and recreation spots are at risk of flooding and inundation," he said.

Other cities across the country also are harmed by the effects of global warming, Nickels told the EPA. "New Orleans suffers from sea level rise and storm intensity. Phoenix suffers from intense summer heat and increases in heat-related mortality. Boston suffers from stress on its water and energy systems."

That is why so many mayors have signed the Climate Protection Agreement, said Mayor Nickels.



"We know that global warming is endangering our cities. We know that we need a federal partner to help solve this global threat," the mayor said. "Whether by regulation or by legislation, it is time for federal action to curtail greenhouse gas pollution and reduce the danger our residents face from global warming."

Nickels will not contest the next mayoral race and will hand the job of Seattle mayor over to someone else in January 2010.

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