

## Summary Report of Elders Climate Action Day

Submitted by Marietta Shapiro, Moms Clean Air Force Intern

On July 12, 2019, Elders Climate Action (ECA), an environmental advocacy nonprofit group, sponsored a meeting on Capitol Hill to discuss concerns, share ideas, and learn about ways to engage in environmental health activism at the federal, regional, and local levels. Attendees included ECA members, youth climate advocates, Environmental Defense Fund/Moms Clean Air Force representatives, and others.

The conference included interesting and informative talks and presentations, panel discussions, and small group break out meetings. ECA leaders described the history, missions, values, and goals and objectives of their organization. Although the group is geared towards senior adults, ECA welcomes all. Local and national climate activism activities were described. The ECA speakers highlighted environmental health initiatives with partner organizations including Congressional lobbying with Moms Clean Air Force and nonpartisan voter outreach with the Environmental Voter Project.

Congressman Don Beyer from Virginia described efforts from the public and private sectors to address climate change. Of note, the Congressman spoke about pending legislation pertaining to carbon pricing, carbon extraction, and electric vehicle tax credits. He also mentioned various industrial investments in renewable energy, including those by AES, ConocoPhillips, and Dominion. Rep. Beyer also acknowledged a contentious history of climate change skepticism in politics and emphasized the importance of grassroot assistance and voter engagement. A member of the office of Rep. Jamie Raskin from Maryland stopped by to assure ECA Day attendees of the Congressman's commitment to policies which support clean air and water. Moreover, he noted that Rep. Raskin remains dedicated to fighting the "war on science" in the current political climate.

Small group meetings enabled participants to get to know one another and conduct a brainstorming session in a more relaxed setting. During these breakout sessions, participants discussed ways they can lessen their own carbon footprints in their daily lives. The "working lunch" culminated in developing personal goals and taking pledges to make concerted efforts to contribute to a healthier planet.

An inspirational youth climate activists panel illustrated that young people can be a powerful force in this arena. According to the panelists, the youth movement attempts to spread their messages via peaceful protests and demonstrations. They spoke about plans for a climate strike this upcoming September 2019, and they are calling for support of school leadership, parents, and grandparents. This portion of the day allowed for an interesting exchange between attendees of all ages. Strategies to engage members of different generations were discussed.

The meeting concluded with a candid discussion of a few key messages. One, was the need to move past viewing climate change through a political party lens. It is a serious issue which affects all people. Secondly, participants agreed upon the need for intergenerational unity and collaborative efforts to help solve the climate change crisis. Finally, the importance of conveying a sense of urgency to lawmakers and industry leaders on this matter. Climate change is not merely a future problem, but rather a current crisis warranting prompt action. ECA Day attendees vowed to keep in touch to continue these critical discussions and learn more about climate action opportunities.