

## EXECUTIVE ORDER

14-01

February 21, 2014

### RHODE ISLAND EXECUTIVE CLIMATE CHANGE COUNCIL

WHEREAS, there is strong evidence and scientific consensus that manmade greenhouse gases are causing an overall rise in global temperatures that is predicted to have profound effects on global climate, weather patterns and ocean conditions, including higher peak summer temperatures, rising sea levels, warmer and wetter winters, ocean acidification, increased periods of drought, increased coastal erosion, and increased frequency of severe precipitation events and flooding; and

WHEREAS, Rhode Island is already seeing the impacts of climate change—

- since 1930, sea level has risen nearly 10 inches at the Newport tide station and is projected to rise at least three feet by 2100
- since the 1960s, the surface temperature of Narragansett Bay has risen four degrees, and the number of days over 90 degrees has doubled
- inland areas that used to be flooded only on rare occasions are now regularly flooded during monthly high tides and extreme precipitation events
- coastal storm surges are now impacting more properties because rising sea levels allow flooding to reach farther inland, exposing residential and commercial properties and public infrastructure to more damage; and

WHEREAS, Rhode Island is engaged in international, federal, and regional efforts to reduce emissions, prepare for climate change, and facilitate international coordination in addressing climate change, including the President's Climate Action Plan, the New England Governors and Eastern Canadian Premiers Climate Change Action Plan, and the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative; and

WHEREAS, it is in the best interests of the state, its businesses, and its residents to lead by example with a comprehensive approach to reduce Rhode Island's greenhouse gas emissions and prepare for the impending impacts of climate change; and

WHEREAS, by acting boldly and acting now, Rhode Island will position itself as a national leader in climate adaptation to strengthen its resilience and support its long-term economic well-being.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, Lincoln D. Chafee, by the authority vested in me as the Governor of the State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations, do hereby order as follows:

1. There shall be established a Rhode Island Executive Climate Change Council (the "Council").
2. The Council members shall include:
  - The Director of the Department of Environmental Management, who shall chair the Council;
  - The Executive Director of the Coastal Resources Management Council;
  - The Director of the Department of Administration;
  - The Director of the Department of Transportation;
  - The Director of the Department of Health;
  - The Executive Director of the Emergency Management Agency;
  - The Commissioner of the Office of Energy Resources;
  - The Director of the Division of Planning; and
  - The Executive Director of the Rhode Island Commerce Corporation.
3. The Council shall be advisory to the Governor and shall have the following duties:
  - a. Assess, integrate, and coordinate climate change efforts throughout state agencies to reduce emissions, strengthen the resilience of communities, and prepare for the effects of climate change;
  - b. Advance the state's understanding of the effects of climate change including, but not limited to, sea level rise, coastal and shoreline changes, severe weather events, critical infrastructure vulnerability, and ecosystem, economic, and health impacts;
  - c. Identify strategies to prepare for these effects and communicate them to Rhode Islanders;
  - d. Work with municipalities to support the development of sustainable and resilient communities;
  - e. Identify and leverage federal, state, and private funding opportunities for emission reduction and climate change preparedness work in Rhode Island;
  - f. Advise the Governor, the General Assembly, and the public on ways to ensure that Rhode Island continues to be a national leader in developing and implementing strategies that effectively address the challenges of climate change; and
  - g. Work with other New England states to explore areas of mutual interest to achieve common goals.

4. To support the Council's work, state agencies shall:
  - a. Assist in implementing this Order;
  - b. Develop short- and long-term greenhouse gas emission reduction strategies and track the progress of these strategies;
  - c. Purchase alternative fuel, hybrid, and electric vehicles that produce lower total emissions of greenhouse gases, and develop programs to encourage state employees to reduce their vehicle miles and use sustainable transportation alternatives (including public transit systems);
  - d. Implement programs to achieve energy savings in state and municipal buildings to reduce greenhouse gases, reduce expenditures on energy, and stimulate economic and job development;
  - e. Increase the deployment of in-state generation of renewable energy and energy efficiency;
  - f. Support efforts to expand Rhode Island's green economy and develop green infrastructure;
  - g. Assess the vulnerability of infrastructure (such as roads and bridges, dams, and wastewater and drinking water treatment facilities) to impacts of climate change and recommend strategies to protect these assets;
  - h. Work with relevant academic institutions and federal agencies to assess the threats of sea level rise, erosion and storm surge and communicate these assessments and threats, along with potential tools to address them, to state agencies and affected communities;
  - i. Develop plans, policies, and solutions based on the latest science to ensure the state continues to have a vibrant coastal economy, including protection of critical infrastructure;
  - j. Develop a climate and health profile report that documents the range of health impacts associated with climate change and identifies the most vulnerable; and
  - k. Encourage municipalities to incorporate climate change adaptation into local hazard mitigation plans and, when feasible, into hazard mitigation projects.
  
5. The Council shall provide brief monthly reports to the Governor with a formal report including findings, recommendations, and a status update on achieving the objectives of this Order by May 1, 2014, with subsequent reports due by May 1 of each year thereafter.

This Order shall take effect immediately.

So ordered:

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Lincoln D. Chafee