



Cornell University Student Assembly

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Type of Action:	Sense of the Body
Status/Result:	New Business

1 S.A. Resolution #39
 2 Committing to Carbon Neutrality by 2035
 3

4 ABSTRACT: This resolution seeks to uphold Cornell University’s commitment to carbon neutrality by a firm
 5 deadline of 2035, adherence to a clear timeline, and dedication to transparent, shared decision-making in
 6 reaching this goal.

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 8 Sponsored by: Emma Johnston ’16
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10 **Whereas**, greenhouse gas emissions contribute directly to anthropogenic climate change, which threatens
 11 human societies, economies, and global ecosystems,
 12

13 **Whereas**, 190 nations agreed to the urgency of the global climate crisis, establishing that by the year 2100,
 14 global temperatures should be at 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels so as to avoid the most devastating,
 15 irreversible effects of climate change,
 16

17 **Whereas**, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change states that global CO2 emissions must reach zero
 18 as early as 2045 to keep warming below 2°C with high probability and bring temperatures back to 1.5°C by
 19 2100
 20

21 **Whereas**, in 2007, President Skorton was one of the first university presidents to sign on to the American
 22 College and University Presidents’ Climate Commitment, thus positioning Cornell as a leader in climate
 23 action amongst institutions of higher education,
 24

25 **Whereas**, over 200 colleges and universities – including Colby College (2013), Duke University (2024), the
 26 University of California system (2025), University of Florida (2025) – have committed to achieving carbon
 27 neutrality within 20 years,
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29 **Whereas**, Cornell faculty, students, and staff collaboratively developed the Climate Action Plan (CAP) in
 30 2009 to comprehensively outline Cornell University’s commitment, duty, and strategy for offsetting net
 31 campus carbon emissions as a “living laboratory” to the world,
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33 **Whereas**, in 2014, President Emeritus Skorton “formally recognize[d] the need to accelerate [Cornell’s]
 34 efforts by embracing the goal of becoming carbon neutral by 2035 [...], motivated by a resolution, passed by
 35 the Faculty Senate on December 11, 2013, that called, in part, for an accelerated timetable for achieving
 36 carbon neutrality,”
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38 **Whereas**, in the 2013-2014 academic year, the Graduate and Professional Student Assembly, University
 39 Assembly, Faculty Senate, and Student Assembly affirmed the speedup of the Climate Action Plan from 2050
 40 to 2035 with resounding support from their constituents,
 41

42 **Whereas**, at the 2015 President’s Sustainable Campus Committee summit, President Garrett emphasized that
 43 “meeting the energy, environmental, economic and social needs of the present – without compromising the
 44 ability of future generations to do the same – is one of the critical challenges of our time, not only for New
 45 York and the country, but for the world,”
 46

47 **Whereas**, President Garrett said that she and campus leaders “agree that moving toward greater sustainability
 48 is a priority,” emphasizing the necessity of Cornell’s campus to act as a living laboratory for sustainability,
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50 **Whereas**, Cornell, a land-grant university for New York State, bears the responsibility of public engagement:
51 to search for knowledge-based solutions to societal and world problems and to lead this pursuit towards
52 public good through example,
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54 **Be it therefore resolved**, that Cornell embrace the vision and active engagement needed to reach carbon
55 neutrality and build upon our ongoing efforts to make our campus more sustainable through our traditions of
56 collaboration in education and research across our colleges, schools and administrative units,
57

58 **Be it therefore resolved**, that Cornell intensifies its commitment to carbon neutrality through our on-going
59 development of new approaches, applications, and technologies that will be valuable on our own campus and
60 globally,
61

62 **Be it therefore resolved**, Cornell will need to manage our resources, financial and human, in creative ways
63 that accomplish our climate goals within our larger missions of education, discovery, innovation and public
64 engagement, and, if we are to succeed, all of us – students, faculty and staff – will need to contribute to this
65 effort,
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67 **Be it further resolved**, students, faculty, and staff be given continuous access and opportunity to engage in
68 decisions regarding 2035 carbon neutrality,
69

70 **Be it further resolved**, Cornell abide by the original timeline, or establish an alternative timeline for Cornell
71 to reach carbon neutrality by 2035,
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73 **Be it further resolved**, that Cornell utilize its world-renowned research resources, including the Atkinson
74 Center for a Sustainable Future (the first research institution in America that unites three pillars of
75 sustainability—energy, the environment, and economic development—in one center), in order to achieve
76 climate action on our campus,
77

78 **Be it finally resolved**, that Cornell will be carbon neutral by 2035 as an explicit commitment to its mission
79 of enhancing the lives and livelihoods of students, the people of New York, and others around the world.
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81 Respectfully Submitted,
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83 Emily Dong '18
84 *Environmental Committee Chair, Student Assembly*
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86 Elizabeth Chi '18
87 *KyotoNow*
88

89 Emma Johnston '16
90 *Executive Vice President, Student Assembly*
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92 *(Reviewed by: Executive Committee, 2/16/2016)*