RESOLUTION NO. 2016-26

A RESOLUTION OF THE ALBANY CITY COUNCIL URGING THE UNITED STATES CONGRESS TO ENACT A REVENUE-NEUTRAL CARBON TAX

WHEREAS, the average surface temperature on Earth has been increasing steadily, with the ten warmest years ever recorded all occurring since 1998; and

WHEREAS, climate scientists overwhelmingly agree that an increase in greenhouse gases in the atmosphere—carbon dioxide (CO₂) in particular—is causing the increase in global temperature; and

WHEREAS, humans burning carbon-based fossil fuels—coal, oil, and natural gas—is the primary cause of the substantial and continuing increase of CO₂ in the atmosphere; and

WHEREAS, in May, 2013, the global atmospheric concentration of CO₂ reached 400 parts per million—the highest level in the last 800,000 years; and

WHEREAS, it’s predicted that by 2100 average global temperature will be 2°F to 11.5°F higher than now depending on the level of future greenhouse gas emissions; and

WHEREAS, the Environmental Protection Agency has determined that current and future greenhouse gas concentrations endanger public health, and according to the Global Humanitarian Forum climate change is already responsible every year for some 300,000 deaths, 325 million people seriously affected, and economic losses worldwide of U.S. $125 billion; and

WHEREAS, climate change caused by global warming-related greenhouse gas emissions including CO₂ already is leading to large-scale problems including ocean
acidification and rising sea levels; more frequent, extreme, and damaging weather events such as heat waves, storms, heavy rainfall and flooding, and droughts; more frequent and intense wildfires; disrupted ecosystems affecting biodiversity and food production; and an increase in heat related deaths; and

WHEREAS, scientists have concluded that by 2100 as many as one in 10 species may be on the verge of extinction due to climate change; and

WHEREAS, rising sea levels, reduced snow pack in the Sierras, and extreme weather are issues that are beginning to affect the San Francisco Bay Area; sea level rise in the Bay Area is expected to increase by sixteen inches by 2050 and fifty-five inches by 2100; and miles of shoreline and parks could be underwater, which could result in $62 billion worth of infrastructure damage in the Bay Area; and

WHEREAS, by mid-century, the City of Albany could see three to four times as many extreme heat days as we do today with related increases in hospitalizations and deaths, especially for vulnerable populations such as seniors, young children, low-income households; and

WHEREAS, the City of Albany has been a leader in the fight against climate change, having adopted a Climate Action Plan in 2010, which aims to reduce the city's carbon emissions to 25% below 2004 baseline emission levels by 2020; and

WHEREAS, the continued increase in global atmospheric CO₂ concentration requires broader, more powerful policies to supplement local and regional efforts to reduce emissions; and

WHEREAS, presently the environmental, health, and social costs of CO₂ emissions are
not included in prices paid for fossil fuels, but rather these externalized costs are borne
directly and indirectly by all Americans and global citizens; and

WHEREAS, to begin to correct this market failure, Congress can enact a national
carbon tax on fossil fuels, based on the amount of CO₂ the fuel will emit when burned;
and

WHEREAS, for efficient administration, fossil fuels can be taxed once, as far
upstream in the economy as practical, or at the port of entry into the United States; and

WHEREAS, a national, revenue-neutral carbon tax starting at a relatively low rate
and increasing steadily over future years is a market-based solution that would minimally
disrupt the economy while sending a clear and predictable price signal to businesses to
develop and use non-carbon-based energy resources; and

WHEREAS, if 100% of carbon tax revenue not necessary for program
administration is returned to households in equal shares, the majority of Americans will
break even or come out ahead, as their dividends match or exceed direct and indirect
price increases due to the tax, protecting lower and middle income households; and

WHEREAS, border adjustments—carbon content-based tariffs on products
imported from countries without comparable carbon pricing, and refunds to our exporters
of carbon taxes paid—can maintain the competitiveness of U.S. businesses in global
markets; and

WHEREAS, a national carbon tax can be implemented quickly and efficiently, and
respond to the urgency of the climate crisis, because the federal government already has
in place mechanisms, such as the Internal Revenue Service, needed to implement and
enforce the tax, and already collects taxes from fossil fuel producers and importers; and
WHEREAS, a national carbon tax would make the United States a leader in mitigating climate change and in the clean energy technologies of the 21st Century, and would incentivize other countries to enact similar carbon taxes, reducing global CO₂ emissions without the need for complex international agreements; and

WHEREAS, the goals of a national carbon tax to reduce CO₂ emissions are consistent with state and local programs designed to mitigate climate change, such as California’s AB32 and Albany’s Climate Action Plan; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Albany City Council hereby urges the United States Congress to enact without delay a tax on carbon-based fossil fuels; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the tax should be collected once, as far upstream in the economy as practical, or at the port of entry into the United States; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the tax rate should start low and increase steadily and predictably, to achieve the goal of reducing U.S. CO₂ emissions to 10% of 1990 levels by 2050; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that tax revenue should be returned to households to protect low and middle income Americans from the impact of rising prices due to the tax; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the international competitiveness of U.S. businesses should be protected by using border tariffs and tax refunds.

PETER MAASS, MAYOR
RESOLUTION NO. 2016-26

PASSED AND APPROVED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF ALBANY,
the 5th day of July, 2016, by the following votes:

AYES: Council Members Barnes, McQuaid, Nason, Pilch and Mayor Maass

NOES: none

ABSENT: none

ABSTAINED: none

RECUSED: none

WITNESS MY HAND AND THE SEAL OF THE CITY OF ALBANY, this
6th day of July, 2016.

Eileen Harrington
DEPUTY CITY CLERK

The City of Albany is dedicated to maintaining its small town ambiance, responding to the needs of a diverse community, and providing a safe, healthy and sustainable community.