

“ICLEI-Local Governments for Sustainability”: Taxpayer Dollars and Foundation Grants Help a U.N.-Inspired Group Show U.S. Cities How to Enact Climate Change Policies By David Libardoni

***Summary:** The big push is on to control global warming by regulating the American economy. While the outgoing Bush administration hesitates to push national legislation, one environmental group is building a coalition of cities and counties to enact local laws regulating carbon emissions. “ICLEI-Local Governments for Sustainability” is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit created by a U.N. conference. Now it’s offering advice to local politicians and recruiting “strategic partners” to build pressure for municipal energy regulation.*

These days city government officials are using precise numbers when they talk about global warming. Naples, Florida mayor Bill Barnett says his city needs to reduce the 757,323 metric tons of greenhouse gases it generated in 2006. Roanoke, Virginia is trying to cut its “carbon footprint” by 12.5%, but so far it’s only managed to cut its emissions by 1.5%. The average resident of Lexington, Kentucky generates 3.46 metric tons of carbon dioxide, far above the national average of 2.24 tons, say city officials, who attribute the bluegrass region’s surprising excess to the use of coal to generate electricity. Officials of New Castle, New York (2000 population: 17,491) says its streetlights, water filtration plant, and exhaust from city workers driving to and from work produced a total of 3,446 metric tons of greenhouse gases. The town is encouraging car-pooling and will make its streetlights more energy-efficient.

“Save the Planet—Or Else” announced Newsweek magazine last year in an issue



New York City mayor Michael Bloomberg has called ICLEI’s work “invaluable” because its “expert technical assistance was instrumental in helping us to complete our first-ever greenhouse gas inventory last year.”

(April 16) devoted to making big government environmental regulation a planetary imperative. The magazine showed a smiling California governor Arnold Schwarzenegger spinning the globe on his finger. To show that passing laws to control the world’s climate is the only sensible thing to do, the magazine explained that governors and even U.S. mayors are getting in on the act:

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Embarking on an environmental program sounds like a great idea. But if you're a mayor trying to cut greenhouse gases, where do you begin? How do you even know how to measure your current levels? That's where an organization called ICLEI—Local Governments for Sustainability can help.

U.N. Plans, Local Actions

ICLEI—Local Governments for Sustainability is an obscure group pushing local governments to regulate the environment—and it's having tremendous success. Originally called the International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives—hence the acronym ICLEI—the group is the product of a United Nations conference: the U.N. *World Congress of Local Governments for a Sustainable Future*. That conference, which met in New York City in 1990, brought together delegates from 200 local governments in 43 countries. They were united by a belief that cities do not need to wait for national governments before taking action on global climate issues.

Ambitious local politicians around the world are using ICLEI as an international platform that allows them to build their careers and quickly network with one another on envi-

ronmental issues. In 2003, the group revised its name to reflect its mission as an advocate for “local governments on the international sustainability stage.” Renamed ICLEI—Local Governments for Sustainability, the international organization is headquartered in Toronto, Canada, and has 150 staff located in 11 offices worldwide [www.iclei.org]. Its membership consists of 977 local governments around the world from Aalborg, Denmark to Zacatecas, Mexico. They focus on broad issues of “sustainability,” the code word for eco-friendly policies, lower industrial production, lower personal consumption, economic equality and other measures of global “social justice.”

The American branch of ICLEI [www.iclei-usa.org] was founded in 1995 by politician Nancy Skinner, who this month may be elected to the California State Assembly from the 14th District, which includes Berkeley, Richmond and parts of Oakland. Skinner was once on the Berkeley city council (1984–1992) where she pushed for an ordinance that made Berkeley the first American city to mandate the recycling of 50% of its waste. So it was natural for her to take a lead in making ICLEI a U.S. pilot project involving a handful of local city governments. Skinner initially ran the program out of her garage with help from a single staff member.

Skinner subsequently became U.S. director of The Climate Group, an international climate change advocacy organization with corporate and government members started in 2004 by former British prime minister Tony Blair. Today the U.S. headquarters for ICLEI and The Climate Group are conveniently located a few floors apart in an Oakland, California office building. Both groups are 501(c)(3) tax-exempt public charities.

Despite its humble origins, ICLEI's influence in the U.S. has grown exponentially. Over 400 cities and counties in 48 states (except Hawaii and South Dakota) are ICLEI members. The group is shooting for 1,000 U.S. members three years from now. Just two years ago, ICLEI had a mere 142 members. Its goal is to build a network of mayors, city councils and local politicians committed to the ideal of “sustainability” and, specifically, to promoting compulsory carbon emissions standards.

The group's 13-member national board of directors includes mayors and county executives as well as ICLEI international members. They include the mayors of Albuquerque, Anchorage, Sacramento and North Little Rock; the county executives of Westchester, N.Y. and Washington's King County (Seattle), and the clerk of Miami-Dade County.

How Cities Use ICLEI's Resources

When cities join the ICLEI flagship program, the Cities for Climate Protection Campaign® (CCP), they get help in creating climate change policies for their own communities. ICLEI asks its members to adopt a formal resolution within the first six months of joining to “affirm your community's commitment to climate protection work.” Payment of a sliding-scale fee (based on population) enables ICLEI to give its member cities a range of useful services. They include:

- * “Software products and associated training to assist with the quantification of greenhouse gas reductions and other benefits of climate protection planning.
- * Access to a professional network of peers through listservs, newsletters, conferences, and workshops.
- * Toolkits, online resources, case studies, fact sheets, policy and practice manuals, and guides on approaches that other local governments have successfully used to reduce greenhouse gases.
- * Training workshops for staff and elected officials on how to develop and implement effective long-term emission reduction strategies.
- * Technical assistance in designing and implementing actions to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.
- * Notification of relevant grant opportunities.
- * Assistance in publicizing local climate protection successes”

Outsourcing the details of policy work to ICLEI lets member cities and counties effectively and quickly enact climate policies. As for a city's overall climate goals, ICLEI specifies “Five Milestones for Climate Protection” that its member localities must implement:

- * Conduct a baseline emissions inventory and forecast
- * Adopt an emissions reduction target

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- * Develop a Local Climate Action Plan
- * Implement policies and measuring
- * Monitor and verify results

This is a tall order, but ICLEI is available every step of the way to offer cities suggestions on how they can reduce their carbon emissions. ICLEI software technology is a major tool that allows cities to measure local carbon emissions, estimate and then track the benefits of emission reduction, and formulate comprehensive local climate action plans.

ICLEI encourages cities to compare their carbon reduction strategies and learn from each others' policies. But cities are not the only entities using ICLEI tools. Air quality agencies, universities, consulting firms, other state agencies, and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) also make use of ICLEI's emission analysis tools.

What happens next? One ICLEI program called Green Fleets™ shows cities how to “green” their police, fire and municipal vehicle fleets, encouraging city authorities to use fuel-efficient and hybrid vehicles, as well as those powered by natural gas. Greenfleets.org gives city officials a blueprint for action, provides sample ordinances and step-by-step scenarios on how to draft a “green fleet” resolution or executive order.

Another ICLEI program, Green Power Governments, suggests model city legislation to reward green technology, specifically solar and wind power. For instance, thanks to ICLEI, the city of Boulder, Colorado enacted an ordinance “to protect the potential to use solar energy.” The law guarantees homeowners and businesses access to sunlight by establishing a hypothetical “solar fence” that limits the amount of shade cast by new construction sites.

ICLEI has other programs that go beyond limiting carbon emissions. At heart, its Cities for Climate Protection Campaign (CCP) is just that—a *campaign*. That means the group finds funding sources, creates media opportunities and develops broad-scale policy goals to “push the boundaries of traditional leadership in the U.S. and achieve stronger, accelerated movement toward sustainability goals through measured performance and tangible results.”

Tax Dollars and Foundation Grants for ICLEI Programs

Several years ago, ICLEI embarked on an aggressive expansion strategy. Since 2005, it has opened five regional headquarters in Boston, Chicago, Houston, Denver and Seattle, in addition to its national headquarters in Oakland, which employs a staff of 35. A sixth office is planned for the Southeast late in 2008. The Seattle office, opened in 2006, has been particularly successful, tripling in a year's time the number of membership cities in the Pacific Northwest.

ICLEI can increase its regional headquarters and the scope of their operations because it is well-funded. The group flourishes on a healthy mix of revenue sources, including foundation contributions, program revenues, municipal membership fees, and taxpayer support.

For years, the EPA has generously supported ICLEI programs. The federal government agency not only underwrites the organization's operational costs, but it also serves as a source of funding for local governments that want ICLEI to help “green” their cities. Over the past 11 years, ICLEI has received between \$250,000 and \$1,500,000 annually in EPA grants to fund its CCP Campaign and emissions analysis software. In 2006, it reported \$904,000 in government grants (out of \$3.3 million in total revenue) on its IRS 990 tax form, the most recent available.

The federal National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) gives ICLEI grants for its Climate Safe Cities program. This program trains city officials to develop emergency preparedness plans to deal with the possibility that global warming will cause rising sea levels, storm surges, and 100-year flood cycles. The ICLEI program is also supposed to train the media on how to provide press coverage explaining these events.

Likewise, EPA funds ICLEI's Urban Heat Island Mitigation, a program that shows cities how to use research on cool paving materials. The EPA grant helps ICLEI develop fact sheets and model city legislation. In addition, ICLEI helps mayors and city councils apply for other EPA grants programs like Clean Schools, Clean Cities and Clean Diesel.

Liberal and environmentalist groups also

subsidize ICLEI operations. In 1997, George Soros's Open Society gave ICLEI a \$2,147,415 grant to support its Local Agenda 21 Project, also sometimes known as Communities 21. These are ICLEI-funded city projects that promote “sustainability.” They draw their inspiration from the Rio Earth Summit, the 1992 United Nations environment conference held in Brazil. Communities that adopt Agenda 21 projects get ICLEI's help in creating “sustainability inventories” and they pass resolutions affirming that they will pursue the “three E's” of sustainable development: environment, economy, and equality. Of course, ICLEI's definition of “sustainable development” comes from the U.N. and liberal groups such as the Sierra Club, Center for American Progress, Natural Resources Defense Council, and The Climate Group.

More recently, ICLEI has received major contributions from the left-leaning Rockefeller Brothers Fund, (\$650,000 in March 2008, \$525,000 in 2006), the Surdna Foundation (\$200,000 in 2006), the Kendall Foundation (\$150,000 in 2007) and the Richard and Rhoda Goldman Foundation (\$100,000 in 2007). ICLEI also got \$500,000 in 2006 from the Kendeda Sustainability Fund, a donor-advised fund administered by the leftist Tides Foundation, to support its Mayors for Climate Protection Initiative.

ICLEI seeks foundation grants for regional projects. Chicago's Joyce Foundation gave ICLEI \$200,000 in 2004 “to convene municipal officials from U.S. and Canadian cities around the Great Lakes in a series of meetings to develop climate policy responses for towns and cities.” The grant (along with a \$125,000 grant from the Argosy Foundation) paved the way for the ICLEI Midwest regional headquarters, which opened in Chicago in 2007. ICLEI also received \$299,000 from the New York Community Trust, which allowed the Big Apple to become the largest city in the world to conduct its own carbon emissions inventory.

Currently, ICLEI wants to establish a global standard for emissions accounting. It is developing cutting-edge internet-based software to allow users to calculate, track, and conduct comparative analysis of greenhouse gas emissions. The William J. Clinton Foundation and Microsoft Corp. are partnering with

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ICLEI on this new initiative. The global ICLEI network and a group called C40, comprised of the world's largest cities on the carbon-reduction bandwagon, will have no-cost access to the program.

Targeting Politicians

ICLEI is well-liked by mayors and city council members because it shows them how to promote climate change initiatives and then does their work for them. (The Center for Climate Strategies, profiled by Christopher C. Horner in the April 2008 *Organization Trends*, pushes state-level global warming policies and is similarly beloved by many governors including Minnesota Gov. Tim Pawlenty.) New York City mayor Michael Bloomberg has called ICLEI's leadership "invaluable" because its "expert technical assistance was instrumental in helping us to complete our first-ever greenhouse gas inventory last year." Susan Rainey, mayor of Walnut Creek, California, a Bay-area city of about 65,000, said this about ICLEI:

ICLEI's five-milestone process makes sense and yields results. That's what sold the Walnut Creek City Council on ICLEI. ICLEI staff is knowledgeable, accessible and invaluable in organizing our coordinated local effort. ICLEI provides training and technical assistance to city staff, identifies best practices and meets with regional air quality, utility, solid waste and transportation agencies to generate baseline emissions inventories that are both useful and defendable. Thank you ICLEI!

Local governments gratefully outsource their work to ICLEI, which even offers hiring advice. The group recommends that cities hire a "sustainability manager" to coordinate an inter-departmental green team representing city administrative, public works, environment, facilities, budget, economic development, planning, social services, and parks agencies "to share ideas about how to improve internal operations to make them

more consistent with environmentally sound practices."

Will a green czar strong-arm city departments into adopting green goals? Will mayors with environmental stars in their eyes set up "visioning" committees to tell city agencies what to do? ICLEI's broad-brush approach shows just how eager it is to shape the urban agenda and how eagerly local politicians seek it out.

The Seattle Greenhawk and his "Emerald" City

Seattle Mayor Greg Nickels is perhaps the best example of a city official who has bought into the ICLEI vision of "sustainability." His public outreach campaign, called Seattle Climate Action NOW!, proposes job creation for a green economy, clean renewable energy, improved public transit and reduced car usage, and ways the city can help citizens and employers conserve natural resources, reduce waste and build energy-efficient

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JAMES DELLINGER

Introduction by Terrence Scanlon
President, Capital Research Center

Understanding the Nonprofit World

Capital Research Center's new *Guide to Nonprofit Advocacy* surveys more than 100 key nonprofit public interest and advocacy organizations shaping U.S. politics and society today. Although the law prohibits 501(c)(3) nonprofits from lobbying and political spending, this year nonprofits are working aggressively through 501(c)(4) and 527 affiliates and umbrella groups to pass laws and elect candidates.

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homes and offices.

The city makes use of ICLEI services, including the Green Fleets initiative for city vehicles. It uses ICLEI emissions calculators to help local businesses cut their carbon emissions. Seattle city government conducts technical assistance workshops for local employers, offers networking services, and provides a recognition program for companies that adopt a carbon cutting program.

Nickels' plan to decrease Seattle's "carbon footprint" calls on city residents to make changes to how they live—and to pay for those changes. Among U.S. cities, Seattle spends the most per capita on waste management. Mayor Nickels recently proposed a 20-cent "green tax" on paper and plastic shopping bags used by food and drug stores. According to Seattle Public Utilities, the tax would generate nearly \$10 million annually for the city. The city would use \$2 million to fund a switch to reusable bags, which it would give away at no cost to families with fixed or low incomes. The other \$8 million would fund more recycling, waste management, and environmental education. The measure, approved by the city council on July 29, takes effect on January 1, 2009, along with a ban on foam containers.

Seattle also sponsors "Green Power options" for city residents. A campaign encourages utility ratepayers to pay a little more each month on their electric bill—a "green" premium—to allow the city to fund ("invest in") solar power pilot projects.

How much does all this cost Seattle? Forbes magazine, which ranked Seattle the #2 "Cleanest City" in 2008 (after Miami) also ranked it the "Most Overpriced City" in 2004 and 2005. In 2008 Forbes called Seattle "America's Most Increasingly Unaffordable City." The city currently battles the highest inflation rate –5.8%– in the U.S.

Nickels is a vocal advocate for local green action. When 141 countries ratified the Kyoto Protocol in February 2005, he launched a campaign to have at least 141 cities sign a U.S. Conference of Mayors' "Climate Protection Agreement." To date, the agreement has been signed by 850 mayors representing nearly 80 million constituents. It calls for cities to meet or beat the Kyoto Protocol's

carbon emission reduction goals: To cut carbon emissions 7% from 1990 levels before 2012. The mayors further promise to urge state and federal legislators to enact a carbon emissions cap-and-trade system to cut greenhouse gases.

To heighten media exposure, ICLEI sponsors a recognition program for mayors who sign the agreement. A "Cool Mayors" website spotlights mayors who do "whatever it takes to bring about climate protection, piece by piece, solution by solution." The Sierra Club similarly promotes cities that sign its "Cool Cities" agreement. Using the media, it provides "showcase solutions" to implement at the state level and nationwide. Both Cool Mayors and Cool Cities propel local politicians into the national debate on climate change.

Community "summit meetings" are another way ICLEI furthers its mission. In 2007, ICLEA co-hosted a Sundance Summit on global warming (with actor Robert Redford at his Utah ranch, Sundance Preserve) and a Texas Mayors Climate Summit, targeting a state heavily involved in fossil fuel production. Later that year, ICLEI opened a Houston-based regional headquarters.

ICLEI's Global Strategy

While U.S. regional offices contribute money and services to local governments, ICLEA also pushes for international climate change policies. Since 1998, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) has supported ICLEI's global programs. That year, the agency gave it a \$16,141 grant, but USAID funding has greatly increased since then. The agency gave ICLEI grants of \$746,526 in 2004 and \$1,361,197 in 2005 for its international programs for cities. ICLEI handed out \$287,600 in 2005 to cities in South Africa and Mexico to support their local CCP campaigns.

All this funding has raised the organization's international profile. With offices and secretariats on six continents and an International Training Center in Freiburg, Germany, ICLEI enjoys worldwide access. Nearly 20,000 local government authorities have participated in training seminars, and over 900 cities are active members of the CCP campaign. A six-year Strategic Plan envisions 10,000 local governments enrolled in the Local

Agenda 21 initiative and participating in its ecoBudget® system for tracking "sustainability factors."

What's next? Well, there's the Green Jobs Pledge, begun in May 2008, in which mayors promise to promote a green private sector economy. Says an enthusiastic Olympia, Washington mayor Mark Foutch:

We are pleased to reach our fifth milestone toward emission reductions this year! ICLEI coached us through the process of measuring our emissions and this has helped us put sustainability into action. Our crowning achievement this year is that city operations will have emissions below 1990 levels. Now that we have proven we can do it we can go out to our community with confidence to ask them to do the same. [emphasis added]

David Libardoni is a student at Tufts University. In 2008, he was a Haller summer intern at the Capital Research Center. Libardoni joined us under the auspices of the Foundation for Teaching Economics.

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BrieflyNoted

A major donor to the far-left group **ACORN** and its affiliates is...(drumroll)...the **Robin Hood Foundation**. The foundation has given ACORN \$821,000 consisting of a \$456,000 grant in 2003 and a \$365,000 grant in 2004. The Robin Hood board today includes **Tom Brokaw** of NBC News and **Marian Wright Edelman**, president of the Children's Defense Fund.

Meanwhile, a recent video from the officially nonpartisan ACORN intended to show how much clout ACORN has on Capitol Hill doesn't feature a single Republican lawmaker. The video called "ACORN Grassroots Democracy Campaign," available on YouTube, showcases a parade of Capitol Hill Democrats as its allies. Shown are Senators **Sherrod Brown** (D-Ohio) and **Robert P. Casey Jr.** (D-Penn.), and Representatives **Dennis Kucinich** (D-Ohio), **Donna Edwards** (D-Md.), **Barney Frank** (D-Mass.), and **Brad Miller** (D-N.C.). In other news, Capital Research Center has discovered that ACORN, which relentlessly argues for higher taxes, can't be bothered to actually pay its own taxes. More than \$3.7 million in tax liens are associated with the group's address in New Orleans. (See the November issue of *Foundation Watch*.)

George Soros's Fund for America, a so-called 527 issue-advocacy organization, quietly passed away in August, NPR reports. The fund was founded in November 2007 by **Democracy Alliance** chairman **Rob McKay** and his lieutenants, **SEIU's Anna Burger** and the **Center for American Progress's John Podesta**. Roll Call reported last Nov. 12 that the new entity could pump "perhaps \$100 million or more into media buys and voter outreach in the run-up to the 2008 elections." NPR reports that the Fund fell short of its goal and was disbanded.

At least 33 pastors across the nation have delivered sermons from the pulpit endorsing political candidates, an act that is tantamount to daring the **Internal Revenue Service** to investigate their churches, the Washington Post reported Sept. 29. The ministers said they have a constitutional right to counsel their congregations on how to vote and that they hoped to gin up a legal battle that will force federal courts to toss a 54-year-old ban on political endorsements by tax-exempt houses of worship. The ministers contend they have a constitutional right to advise their worshipers how to vote. As Rev. **Ron Johnson Jr.** of Crown Point, Ind., put it, "The point that the IRS says you can't do it, I'm saying you're wrong."

The **Cato Institute** has selected **Robert A. Levy**, a former senior fellow in the Institute's Center for Constitutional Studies and a board member since 2007, as chairman of the Institute. He replaces **William Niskanen** who was named chairman emeritus after 23 years of service as chairman. Levy is co-author of *The Dirty Dozen: How Twelve Court Cases Radically Expanded Government and Eroded Freedom*.