



Press Release

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Savannah Forum Addressed Climate-Change, Clean Energy and Federal Support for Urgently Needed Improvements

Congressional candidate Wade Herring attended and commented. Representative Buddy Carter was invited but did not attend.

On October 13th the Center for a Sustainable Coast [CSC] hosted a public forum focusing on the climate crisis and new federal funding support for expanding the use of clean energy to help curb heat-trapping fossil-fuel emissions. The event, featuring both live and virtual speakers, was held at the Savannah Cultural Arts Center.

Welcoming participants and providing background on the climate issue, CSC's co-founder and director, David Kyler told the audience, "It is revealing that a recent survey by the Yale Climate Communications Center reported that although well over two-thirds of Americans believe climate change is either important or urgent, more than 60% of those who prioritize the issue say they seldom if ever talk about it. That is a major reason why we are here this evening—to ensure that the public talks about the climate crisis and, equally important, supports political actions required to make a rapid transition to the clean-energy economy."

Headlining the forum program was Kate Cell, Senior Climate Campaign Manager at the Union of Concerned Scientists. Referencing a number of statistics and graphs, Cell provided an eye-opening view of alarming climate impacts predicted for the next 30 years, based on the latest scientific research.

According to Cell:

"The impacts of climate change are already being felt across the Southeast and in particular in its coastal communities. But there is time to decarbonize our economy and avoid the worst impacts of climate change. Based on modeling done by the Union of Concerned Scientists, flooding and temperature increases will cause billions of dollars in damage along Georgia's coast by mid-century. Tens of thousands of homes will be uninhabitable due to frequent flooding, and unbearable heat will occur as much as six weeks a year—seven times more often than now—which could be cut by a third or more if quick actions are taken to curb heat-trapping emissions. Unless these emissions are reduced, by 2100 temperatures will be life-threatening for about three months a year in coastal Georgia."

When Congress passed the Inflation Reduction Act in August and President Biden signed it into law, some \$370 billion in federal funds became available to speed the urgently needed conversion to clean power sources and energy-efficiency upgrades.

The Center's Savannah event was scheduled in view of the mid-term election approaching, as this unprecedented injection of funding provides urgently needed opportunities for taking climate action. Timely efforts to reduce fossil fuel emissions will help restrict the destructive effects of flooding, drought, and extreme heat that threaten humanity here on the coast and elsewhere.

Also speaking was Brionte McCorkle, director of Georgia Conservation Voters, who is working to secure a more just and sustainable future by electing pro-environment candidates and holding elected officials accountable for their actions and voting record. McCorkle's comments focused on the diverse array of federal supports offered under the Inflation Reduction Act. She elaborated on funding and tax-credits available for individuals, small

business, and communities interested in improving energy efficiency, the production and storage of clean energy, and other upgrades and clean-energy technologies that will employ thousands of people in the years ahead.

“For Georgians to secure the greatest benefits from the Inflation Reduction Act, state legislators and local elected officials will need to take notice and take action to revise policies that impede the used of these federal supports,” McCorkle emphasized.

Continuing, she added, “The Inflation Reduction Act is the most significant legislation in U.S. history to tackle the climate crisis. Georgia communities and households that want to address climate change often lack the resources and support to do so. The IRA is a significant catalyst for action that will provide Georgians jobs, savings, and other benefits. The funding provided by this act will help lower energy costs for households and businesses all across Georgia and create manufacturing jobs for American workers. The old way of doing business in Georgia doesn't have to be the only way. The IRA is a catalyst for the clean, secure, and healthy future we all want for our children and grandchildren.”

Panelist Dr. Jim Reichard, a full faculty member at Georgia Southern University's Department of Geology, gave a quick but comprehensive overview of the science behind climate change, including what is causing it and why commonly heard denials about these causes are unfounded.

Afterwards Dr. Reichard said,

“Science has shown that modern global warming and climate change are being driven by human activity, principally the burning of fossil fuels. This has led to more intense droughts and heat waves and extreme weather events. For coastal Georgia, we will also have to face accelerated sea level rise and the risk of more powerful hurricanes, all of which will have serious economic impacts. At this point our best course of action to avoid the worst impacts of global warming and climate change is to reduce global carbon emissions by quickly transitioning to low-carbon economies.

Center board president Steve Willis provided the audience with a broad perspective on the historical significance of our predicament and decisions that must be made to prevent the worst impacts of climate change. After the event, Willis said:

“Although the self-inflicted global warming crisis is probably the greatest threat humanity has ever encountered (including nuclear weapons), the harnessing of the inexhaustible power sources of wind, sun, and tides--which is the necessary solution to global warming--may be the greatest and most desirable opportunity we have ever had. Let's do the smart thing before it's too late.”

During the question-and-answer period, Democratic candidate for Congress, Wade Herring made some comments, and later he shared this statement:

“I was grateful to attend the forum hosted by the Center for a Sustainable Coast on the evening of October 13, 2022, to learn more about the imminent threat posed to coastal Georgia by climate change, but also to discuss the positive actions that we can take to prevent damage to this beautiful place where we live. When I am elected to Congress, I will work hard to make sure that the First District gets its fair share of infrastructure funds, as well as the sustainable energy investments from the Inflation Reduction Act. These investments mean jobs for Georgians, a thriving economy, and protection for coastal Georgia that we are grateful to call home. I do not understand why Buddy Carter voted against both of these important bills which are so important to the First District. Carter continues to demonstrate that he is out of step with what matters to the people of this District.

From 2018 up to the present, a listing of Center letters and opinion columns published in Georgia media outlets features over 150 items explaining timely CSC positions on issues related to climate and clean energy.

The October 13th forum was the fifth Savannah event Sustainable Coast has organized in the past decade to build support for effective action on these issues by cultivating well-informed, open public discussion.

A video recording of the event will be available. Please contact the Center at susdev@gte.net.

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