

A hot measure against hot air

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Léo Azambuja / The Garden Island

LIHU‘E — The last decade has been the hottest one on record, negatively affecting food and water supplies. And President Barack Obama will hear about it again, this time straight from the Kaua‘i County Council.

The council unanimously — and without much discussion — approved a resolution in support of reducing greenhouse pollution under the federal Clean Air Act. A copy of the resolution now will be sent to Obama and Lisa Jackson, administrator of the federal Environmental Protection Agency.

“Climate change is not an abstract problem for the future or one that will affect far-distant places,” Councilman KipuKai Kuali‘i read from the resolution. “Rather, climate change is happening now, we are causing it, and the longer we wait to act, the more we lose and the more difficult the problem will be to solve.”

Resolution 2012-58, introduced by Kuali‘i, urges Obama and Jackson to move swiftly to employ and enforce the Clean Air Act so the United States can do its part in reducing carbon dioxide in the atmosphere to no more than 350 parts per million.

In 2008, leading climate scientist Dr. James Hansen said if civilization wishes to preserve the planet similar to which it developed and to which life is adapted, evidence suggests that carbon dioxide levels must be reduced from the then-current 385 ppm to 350 ppm at the most, the resolution states.

Now, four years later, the current level of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere is approximately 392 ppm, according to the resolution.

[By passing the resolution, the council joins a broad range of cities such as Detroit, Nashville and Salt Lake City as part of the Center for Biological Diversity’s national Clean Air Cities campaign, according to a press release from the center.](#)

“Kaua‘i’s leaders understand the threats posed by climate change, particularly to islands like Kaua‘i, and support one key solution: the Clean Air Act,” said campaign director Rose Braz said in the Thursday release.

Climate changes are responsible for approximately 300,000 deaths worldwide each year, besides seriously affecting 325 million people and causing \$125 billion around the globe, the resolution states. In 2011 in the U.S. alone, a record 14 weather and climate disasters occurred, including droughts, heat waves and floods, costing human lives and at least \$1 billion each in damages.

For four decades, the Clean Air Act has allowed for a comprehensive, successful system of pollution control that saves lives and creates economic benefits exceeding its costs by many times, according to the resolution.

“With the Clean Air Act, air quality in this country has improved significantly since 1970, despite major growth both in our economy and industrial production,” states the resolution, adding that between 1970 and 1990, the six main pollutants covered by the act were reduced by somewhere between 47 percent and 93 percent, and airborne lead was virtually eliminated.

The economic benefits of the act are estimated at \$2 trillion — 30 times the cost of regulation — according to the resolution.

The U.S. Supreme Court in 2007 ruled in Massachusetts vs. EPA that greenhouse gases are air pollutants as defined in the Clean Air Act, and that the EPA has the authority to regulate such gases, the resolution states.

“Communities around the country, from Miami to Los Angeles — and now Kaua‘i — are sending an urgent message to our national leaders,” Braz said. “To avert a climate crisis, we need to act now and through the Clean Air Act.”