

# New York State Bar Association

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**SHARON STERN GERSTMAN**

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October 20, 2017

President Donald J. Trump  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW  
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Trump:

I am writing on behalf of the New York State Bar Association to register the Association's objection to your decision to have the United States withdraw from the Paris Agreement. The Association's membership of 72,000 attorneys includes approximately 1,000 attorneys in our Environmental & Energy Law Section practicing in the public and private sector, who have devoted their careers to the field of environmental law. We are acutely aware that climate change has evolved from an issue that initially merited further study to an outright crisis demanding prompt and effective action.

We have examined carefully the facts and circumstances set forth in the endangerment finding on greenhouse gas emissions issued by the Environmental Protection Agency. It makes a clear and compelling case for national action on climate change. The symptoms of climate change predicted by scientists – in the form of prolonged droughts, extraordinary heat waves and storm events, wildfires, widespread retreat of glaciers and arctic ice cover, range shifts of plants, animals and insects, ocean acidification, and readily measurable sea level rise – are now unmistakable.

Significantly, numerous studies warn of the devastating impact of climate change in the U.S. in a few decades if effective measures are not soon taken to reduce carbon emissions. Such predictions led the 2016 report of the World Economic Forum to identify the “failure of climate change mitigation and adaptation” to be the *top risk* facing society – ahead of weapons of mass destruction, terrorism and the increasing scarcity of potable water. The Paris Agreement aims to mitigate such risks by holding the increase in global average temperatures to a level that “would significantly reduce the ... impacts of climate change.”

We still have the chance to achieve the goals of the Paris Agreement, but doing so will require society-wide mobilization on a scale not seen since World War II. Such a massive undertaking would require that *all* levels of government, and all sectors of society do their part in reducing our nation's greenhouse gas emissions. It also would require the U.S. to engage with other nations to ensure that they meet the commitments they already have made in the Paris Agreement.

With regard to activity at the state level, herewith for your consideration is a link to our Association's report, *Taking Action on Climate Change in New York: 2017 Update Report*, approved by our House of Delegates in June 2017. <http://www.nysba.org/ClimateChangeReport>

We respectfully urge you to reconsider the decision to withdraw the United States from this landmark international accord, and that you reverse the course your administration has followed thus far on climate change. In doing so, we note that until recently bipartisan efforts have devised common solutions to critical environmental problems. Indeed, many of our bedrock environmental laws – such as the National Environmental Policy Act, the Clean Air Act (“CAA”) and the 1990 CAA amendments -- were enacted into law during Republican administrations, with bipartisan support from Congress. We also note that new industries providing hundreds of thousands of well-paying jobs could be fostered by a national program aimed at reducing greenhouse gas emissions. The explosive employment growth experienced over the last few years in the wind and solar industries well illustrates the employment opportunities that result from clean energy initiative, as pointed out in the U.S. Department of Energy's *U.S. Energy and Employment Report*, January, 2017.

We hope that upon reflection you will realize that your legacy would be far better served if history recorded you as the President who finally broke the partisan logjam that has prevented meaningful action on climate change mitigation.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sharon Stern Gerstman', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Sharon Stern Gerstman  
President