Dear Governor Bullock:

As legislators who are profoundly concerned about the threat of climate change, we applaud your recent statements regarding the danger to the people of Montana posed by President Trump’s decision to withdraw the United States from the Paris climate accords. Like you, we recognize that climate change can only be arrested through international collective action that includes the committed participation of the United States. In withdrawing from the Paris accords, the President has abandoned that commitment, and, sadly, American global leadership in general. While it is true that the remaining signatories have pledged to forge ahead, we believe that the accords have been seriously destabilized, and the potential consequences of that destabilization, for Montana and indeed the whole world, are extraordinarily serious.

But all is not lost. Numerous governors, state legislatures, mayors and businesses have stated their intention to honor the United States’ Paris commitments despite the President’s decision to withdraw them. We believe that these actions are essential to sustaining the Paris agreements until the Federal government is once again able to conduct itself in a responsible manner, and we believe that Montana should join in that effort.

Specifically, we believe that Montana, under your direction, should commit itself to firm, quantitative, and verifiable reductions in statewide greenhouse gas emissions.

We recognize that technically, economically and politically such a commitment will be very challenging, but we are confident that it is within the resources of your office to initiate the analysis and planning required to put emissions reduction efforts in place, and we stand ready to work with you as we move forward. We believe that the efforts of Governor Schweitzer’s Climate Change Advisory Commission in 2008 and of the Department of Environmental Quality in 2014 (in response to the EPA’s Clean Power Plan) provide useful models of how to proceed as well as an important existing cache of information regarding emissions reduction strategies.

Regardless of how they are undertaken, we believe that the following are the minimum necessary steps for developing and implementing an emissions reductions plan:

1. Development of an emissions inventory and monitoring system capable of verifying that target reductions are being met.
2. Identification of effective strategies for reducing emissions. Many of these - particularly those associated with electrical generation, such as improved efficiency, replacement of fossil fuels with renewables, carbon capture and storage, and so forth - are already well known. Others, especially those related to the transportation and industrial sectors, less so.
3. Determination of the cost of various strategies and of the least cost combination of strategies capable of producing targeted emissions reductions.
4. Analysis of the policy measures and, in particular, the legislation required to implement the least costly combination of strategies. This analysis should include market-based policies such as carbon taxes, offsets and bubbles, cap and trade, interstate and intraregional emissions trading, and the like.

5. Because capping emissions will inevitably lead to a transformation in the way energy is produced and transportation is managed, an assessment of the impacts of the policy on adversely affected communities, industries, occupations and income groups is essential, as well as the identification of measures needed to ameliorate those impacts.

We understand that mandating and achieving meaningful reductions in the state’s greenhouse gas emissions is going to be no easy feat. We understand as well the compelling logic of doing nothing, avoiding the costs of action, and benefiting from the efforts of others. But that logic, compelling as it might be, is myopic. If it applies in Montana, it applies with equal force in California and Hawaii and China and France, and ultimately leads to paralysis. To see beyond that wrongheaded logic requires vision, creativity, and the courage to risk self-sacrifice. In a word, it requires leadership. In our view, to the grave peril of the nation and the world, President Trump does not understand and refuses to exercise the leadership required of him. And so we ask you to step forward, and pledge to support you in this effort.

Rep. Kim Abbott
Rep. Laurie Bishop
Sen. Dick Barrett
Rep. Bryce Bennett
Rep. Zach Brown
Rep. Willis Curdy
Rep. Amanda Curtis
Rep. Mary Ann Dunwell
Rep. Janet Ellis
Sen. Tom Facey
Rep. Dave Fern
Rep. John Fleming
Rep. Mofle Funk
Sen. Jen Gross
Rep. Jim Hamilton
Rep. Ellie Boldman Hill
Rep. Denise Hayman
Sen. Margie MacDonald
Sen. Sue Malek
Rep. Shane Morigeau
Rep. Andrea Olsen
Sen. Mike Phillips
Sen. JP Pmnichowski
Rep. Marilyn Ryan
Sen. Diane Sands
Rep. Kathy Swanson
Sen. Cynthia Wolken
Rep. Tom Woods

City Commissioner Andres Haladay, Helena
City Commissioner Rob Farris-Olsen, Helena
Mayor Bob Kelly, Great Falls
Mayor Carson Taylor, Bozeman
County Commissioner Jean Curtiss, Missoula
County Commissioner Nicole Rowley, Missoula
County Commissioner Dave Strohmaier, Missoula