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5 **A RESOLUTION**

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7 Calling on the Wisconsin Attorney General to initiate a lawsuit against fossil fuel  
8 companies to seek justice and damages for environmental and climate damage in  
9 Wisconsin communities

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12 WHEREAS, the association between the burning of fossil fuel and climate  
13 change has been extensively documented; and major corporations such as Chevron,  
14 ExxonMobil, Shell, and others have known for decades about the adverse climate  
15 impacts of their products; and

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17 WHEREAS, 20 municipalities, 6 states, the District of Columbia, and one industry  
18 trade association have brought litigation against major fossil fuel companies for  
19 deceiving the public and policymakers about the dangerous climate impacts of their  
20 products; and seeking damages to cover the mitigation of climate catastrophe; and

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22 WHEREAS, these lawsuits have been brought forward under three legal  
23 theories: common law torts, products liability, and consumer protection; and the states  
24 of Vermont, Rhode Island, Connecticut, Minnesota, Delaware, Massachusetts, and the  
25 District of Columbia have each sued under one of these categories, along with the  
26 counties of Anne Arundel, MD, Boulder and San Miguel, CO, Maui, HI, King County,  
27 WA, and Marin, San Mateo, Imperial Beach, and Santa Cruz, CA; and

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29 WHEREAS, liability actions against fossil fuel companies could generate billions  
30 of dollars to help offset the impact of climate change on local communities, establishing  
31 a sustainable and adequate source of climate change mitigation revenue for local  
32 Wisconsin governments; and

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34 WHEREAS, the impacts from climate change in Wisconsin stretch far and wide,  
35 impacting every corner of the state; and these impacts include natural disasters, like  
36 tornadoes, polar vortexes, wildfires, flooding, extreme heat and drought, and much  
37 more; and

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39 WHEREAS, according to Wisconsin for Environmental Justice, the impacts of  
40 extreme weather events including flooding, tornados, and drought have cost Wisconsin  
41 approximately \$100 billion over the past 20 years; and

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43 WHEREAS, a 2014 "Climate Change Vulnerability Analysis" by the Milwaukee  
44 Metropolitan Sewerage District anticipates, among other things, Metropolitan Milwaukee

45 will likely see larger storms and more precipitation will fall as rain rather than snow,  
46 potentially rendering area green infrastructure less effective when contending with storm  
47 surges and lowering the water level of Lake Michigan due to evaporation exceeding  
48 precipitation; and

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50 WHEREAS, Milwaukee County has taken bold and measurable steps to  
51 demonstrate its commitment to combating climate change and investing in resiliency  
52 and mitigation efforts including committing to the principles and goals of The Paris  
53 Agreement for climate change awareness (File No. 17-506) committing the County to  
54 the pursuit of clean energy and climate solutions by joining the Wisconsin Local  
55 Government Climate Coalition (File. No. 21-390), and by establishing the Milwaukee  
56 City-County Joint Taskforce on Climate and Economic Equity to achieve net  
57 greenhouse gas emission reductions (File No. 19-582); and (File No. 19-582); and

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59 WHEREAS, the Governor's Taskforce on Climate Change, which delivered a  
60 final report in October 2021, acknowledged the severe impact of fossil fuel on  
61 Wisconsin's climate and specifically noted the disparate impact of climate change on  
62 communities of color, lower-income Wisconsinites, and, especially, on Wisconsin's  
63 Indigenous population; and

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65 WHEREAS, Black, Indigenous, and other communities of color and low-income  
66 communities are disproportionately impacted by climate change; and in Wisconsin,  
67 working-class communities are subject to pipelines; low-income communities are  
68 exposed to fracking, mining, and hazardous waste industries; and, residents of these  
69 communities are more likely to experience more exposure to polluted air; and

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71 WHEREAS, Wisconsin taxpayers are increasingly subjected to the economic  
72 hardship associated with addressing climate change; and the Governor's Taskforce  
73 estimates climate change has already racked up billions in climate-related disaster  
74 costs, which will only continue to increase in the coming years; and

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76 WHEREAS, Wisconsin Governor Tony Evers and Lieutenant Governor Mandela  
77 Barnes, in creating the Taskforce on Climate Change, called for "bold action" to address  
78 the climate crisis; and the governor has applauded the task force's emphasis on  
79 environmental justice, with a focus on communities of color that have been subjected to  
80 increasingly devastating impacts of climate change; and

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82 WHEREAS, Wisconsin Attorney General Josh Kaul has called out weak  
83 enforcement of environmental protections and calls on polluters to be held accountable;  
84 and AG Kaul expressed a commitment to fighting against climate change and for the  
85 climate rights of all Wisconsin residents; and

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87 WHEREAS, in support of preventing climate disaster, creating a healthy, livable  
88 Wisconsin for all residents, and holding to account fossil fuel companies that have  
89 contributed to climate change in Wisconsin, the U.S., and across the globe; and  
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91 WHEREAS, the Committee on Intergovernmental Relations, at its meeting of  
92 March 10, 2022, recommended adoption of File No. 22-404 (vote 3-1); now, therefore,  
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94 BE IT RESOLVED, Milwaukee County hereby supports the Wisconsin Attorney  
95 General initiating legal action against major fossil fuel companies to hold them  
96 accountable for the climate damages they have caused and to fund Wisconsin's climate  
97 change mitigation efforts; and  
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99 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, Milwaukee County supports an equitable  
100 disbursement of any funds awarded to the State of Wisconsin from a climate-related  
101 lawsuit and urges the state to ensure that financing will be allocated in meaningful  
102 partnership with the people in cities and counties who have been most impacted by the  
103 climate crisis; and  
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105 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, Office of Government Affairs staff is authorized  
106 and requested to communicate the contents of this resolution to the Wisconsin Attorney  
107 General and State policymakers, and support legislation that achieves the criteria  
108 outlined in this resolution.  
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111 03/10/22

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