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The blog of Executive Director Michael Brune

Determined, Not Defeated

This post is a slightly edited version of remarks Michael Brune gave at the National Press Club in Washington, D.C., November 9, 2016.

This was a deeply disappointing election for the United States -- and the world. For people all over the country, the pain, anger, and fear at the prospect of a Trump presidency are very real.

As we reflect on what this means for our country and our planet, it's most important that we stand in solidarity with all those who have been targeted by Trump during his campaign. People of color, Muslims, immigrants, women, the disabled -- millions of Americans have been singled out and attacked by Donald Trump before he has even taken office.

We are clear-eyed about the fact that those attacks could continue once he is inaugurated. That is why, as the saying goes, we will not mourn (for too long, anyway) -- we will organize.

We aren't defeated. We are determined. What is important to remember is that millions upon millions of Americans -- a majority of voters, in fact -- stood up to Donald Trump's ignorance, his misogyny, and his racism. Those same millions will stand up every day to ensure that he can't roll back the progress we've made in recent years.

Make no mistake -- the election of Donald Trump could be devastating for our climate and our future. Donald Trump now has the unflattering distinction of being the only head of state in the entire world to reject the scientific consensus that mankind is driving climate change. Campaigning is one thing; governing is another. Trump must choose whether he will be a president remembered for putting America and the world *back* on a path to climate disaster, or for listening to the American public, investing in the fastest-growing sector in the U.S. economy -- clean energy -- and keeping us on a path of climate progress.

He should choose wisely. Otherwise, we can guarantee President Trump the hardest fight of his life every step of the way.

The new president will also soon learn that there are some things he cannot change.

He can't change the fact that the world is heating up, and that we are reaching a tipping point. He can't change the fact that clean energy sources are outcompeting dirty fuels like coal, gas, and nuclear power all over the country. He can't change the fact that both the market and the climate movement are aligned to replace coal plants with clean energy -- nearly 250 plants to date, with many more to come. Scientists, students, business leaders, and activists are moving this nation beyond dirty fuels to clean energy, and Donald Trump can't reverse that tide.

We see no reason to stop leading on climate and clean energy. We defeated most of the new coal plants proposed during the George W. Bush administration -- 184 to be exact -- with grassroots power, and we can and will win the same kinds of victories under the Trump administration. We're also going to bring that focus to growing the clean energy economy on a state and local level, helping grow the blossoming number of cities committed to 100 percent clean energy. That is progress Trump cannot stop.

And it may not have gotten the attention it deserved during the election, but both public opinion and the market strongly favor clean energy over fossil fuels. In fact, there is a consensus among Clinton supporters *and* Trump supporters that supporting clean energy jobs should be a priority -- just look at the defeat of the anti-solar Amendment 1 in Florida for one example of bipartisan popular support for solar and wind.

All of those factors will keep our progress moving ahead regardless of who is in the White House. We've been winning important victories in state houses, on public utility commissions, on ballot initiatives, and in corporate boardrooms -- and we will keep winning.

One more thing needs to be addressed: Trump's threat to "cancel" the Paris agreement.

Whether he could is the first question. What we do know is that it would be extraordinarily difficult for Trump to remove the U.S. from the Paris Agreement. Already, his position is causing international blowback in very pointed and, in some respects, unprecedented ways.

If Trump does try to undermine climate action, he will run headlong into an organized mass of people who will fight him in the courts, in the states, in the marketplace, and in the streets.

Meanwhile, you can be absolutely sure that environmental advocates will continue to speak out and defend essential clean air, clean water, and other environmental protections when they come under attack by a Trump administration, as they most certainly will -- and we will be louder than ever before.

Finally, it bears repeating that this loss hurts for reasons that extend far beyond the immediate consequences for federal environmental policy. We stand in total solidarity with communities of color, Muslims, women, and all those who may be threatened under a Trump administration. They have an ally in the environmental movement. In the meantime, we will not be licking our wounds but preparing for the fights to come.