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Twenty-one Local Candidates Commit to Carbon Neutrality for their Political Campaigns

Candidates agree to offset the greenhouse gases created by the production and use of political mail pieces, yard signs and other campaign activities

TALLAHASSEE, FL – Today Leon County Commissioner Rick Minor announced that 21 candidates for local political office have committed to carbon neutrality for their campaigns. Technical assistance for this initiative will be provided by local non-profit Sustainable Tallahassee, which will help campaigns calculate their ‘carbon footprint’, or the total amount of carbon dioxide produced by each campaign’s operations.

Minor, who ran carbon neutral political campaigns of his own in 2010 and 2018, encouraged the candidates to offset the carbon dioxide greenhouse gas generated by their campaigns’ activities, including the production and use of political mail pieces and yard signs.

Once their campaigns have concluded, each candidate will then fulfill their commitment by making a monetary donation to a carbon offset fund of their choosing. Carbon offset funds invest in carbon-reducing projects, thus negating the effect of the greenhouse gases produced by a campaign.

“We believe many local voters are concerned about climate change and that they want to know that candidates are sincere in addressing the issue,” said Mike Mitchell, President of Sustainable Tallahassee. “The Carbon Neutral Campaign (CNC) Program allows candidates to demonstrate their commitment -- in a real, tangible way -- before they’re even elected.”

“We believe this initiative is the first of its kind in the entire nation,” said Minor. “Our goal is to make carbon neutral political campaigns a standard practice for local races within Leon County, and then we hope other communities will follow our lead,” said Minor. “In the process, we’ll also boost investments in carbon offset funds, which will increase sustainability here and throughout the country.”

The following local candidates have committed to running carbon neutral campaigns, starting with the qualifying date of June 12th and continuing until their race has concluded:

- Leon County Sheriff
 - Walter McNeil (*incumbent*)
 - Tommy L. Mills
- Leon County Superintendent of Schools
 - Rocky Hanna (*incumbent*)
 - Pam Hightower
- Leon County Commission, At Large, Group 1
 - Robin Colson
 - Carolyn Cummings
 - Jeff Hendry
 - Danielle Irwin
 - Kelly Otte
 - Melissa Villar (*write-in candidate*)
- Leon County Commission, District 4
 - Bryan Desloge (*incumbent*)
 - Brian Welch
- Tallahassee City Commission, Seat 1
 - Elaine W. Bryant (*incumbent*)
 - William Moore
 - Jacqueline "Jack" Porter
- Tallahassee City Commission, Seat 2
 - Trish Brown
 - Curtis Richardson (*incumbent*)
 - Bill Schack
 - Gerri Seay
- Leon Soil and Water Conservation, District 5
 - James Billingsley
 - Kyle Frost

Fortunately, committing to carbon neutrality isn't cost prohibitive for local candidates. For example, printing and mailing 10,000 campaign mail pieces produces about 5 tons of carbon dioxide. According to Sustainable Tallahassee, it costs about \$14 to negate one ton of CO₂, so a campaign would need to donate \$70 (\$14/ton x 5 tons) to a carbon offset fund to compensate for the carbon dioxide produced by printing and mailing the 10,000 mail pieces.

A political campaign in Tallahassee that raises about \$85,000 (and spends around \$25,000 on mail pieces) will spend about \$500 to offset its entire carbon footprint. Smaller campaigns – especially those that do not use much campaign mail -- will spend much less.

NOTE: As a 501(c)3 organization, Sustainable Tallahassee, Inc. does not endorse political candidates or campaigns. Candidates who commit to carbon neutrality will receive technical assistance from Sustainable Tallahassee upon request, but this assistance should not be viewed as an endorsement of those candidates by the organization.

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FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What is carbon neutrality?

1. having or resulting in no net addition of carbon dioxide to the atmosphere
2. counterbalancing the emission of carbon dioxide with carbon offsets

([Source: Merriam-Webster](#))

What is a carbon footprint?

‘Many of our daily activities - such as using electricity, driving a car, or disposing of waste - cause greenhouse gas emissions. Together these emissions make up a household’s **carbon footprint**.’ ([Source: U.S. Environmental Protection Agency](#))

Producing yard signs, driving to meetings, printing mail pieces and most other campaign tasks all contribute to a political campaign’s carbon footprint.

What is a carbon offset and how does it work?

A carbon offset is 'an action or activity (such as the planting of trees or carbon [sequestration](#)) that compensates for the emission of carbon dioxide or other [greenhouse gases](#) to the atmosphere.’ ([Source: Merriam-Webster](#))

Carbon offset donations will then be used for carbon reduction projects that plant trees, expand renewable energy capacity, or capture greenhouse gases.

Has this been done in Tallahassee in the past?

As a candidate in 2010, Rick Minor committed to carbon neutrality for his Florida State House District 9 campaign. He donated a carbon offset amount of \$321 to [CarbonFund.org](#). For his County Commission race in 2018, Minor made a \$606 donation to [Sustainable Tallahassee’s Community Carbon Fund](#) to offset the carbon produced by his campaign.