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Climate Change and its Effect on NEPA

Green vegetation, wildflower fields, and a cool breeze on a hot day. These are aspects that remind us of summer on Northeastern Pennsylvania. People shedding their winter coats and preparing for their summer tans. Children riding bikes, fathers going fishing with their sons, and mothers buying bathing suits with their daughters. All of these are activities we look forward to after spending months shoveling snow, breaking ice, and dressing in multiple layers of clothing. Now picture this: preparing for a snowstorm on 70-degree weather, going from wearing shorts and a crop top one day to wearing fuzzy socks and a coat the next day, and getting startled by the jarring flash flood warnings. This is the reality of summer in Northeastern Pennsylvania. From spiking food prices to irregular weather, climate change has manifested in our lives in multiple ways. However, I believe that Pennsylvanians have the ability and duty to help reduce the damage caused by global warming on our local environment.

The footprint climate change has left in our local environment can already be seen throughout northeastern Pennsylvania. Significant flood damage, severe heat waves, economic and health complications; these are just a few of the countless ways the damage caused by global warming are affecting the lives of Pennsylvanians, including my own. The increasing rainfall and flooding periods are threatening the aging infrastructure of the commonwealth. Our sewers, gutters, and levees may be insufficient to handle the drastic changes in rainfall. It is common to see buildings with water leaks and flooded floors nowadays. Most buildings are not built to withstand the damage caused by constant rains and aggressive winds. Flooded streets are preventing Pennsylvanians from commuting to work and school. However, though flooding is the highest-risk hazard facing Pennsylvania, the severe heat waves are another result of climate

change that are impacting our everyday lives. For instance, winter activities like snowboarding or skiing are facing irregular and short periods of availability, which affects the people offering and using the service alike. Sun related activities such as tanning may put you at higher risk of suffering from heat-related illnesses and skin diseases. Additionally, heat waves also indirectly effect the lives of Pennsylvanians through higher electricity bills due to longer periods using air conditioning units and prices rising for certain winter crops. To put it in retrospect, it would be easier to name the ways climate change is not affecting northeastern Pennsylvania.

Undoubtedly, global warming and climate change are manifesting in all aspects of our everyday lives. However, Pennsylvania residents have the choice to either continue to destroy our ecosystem and lives simultaneously or stop the exponential damage caused by global warming. I believe that if we took drastic measures to lead eco-friendly lives the damage would not be as severe as it is now. Therefore, I propose to leaders in our community to implement compulsory environmental conservation classes in all schools to address this issue. Just like the old saying “you cannot teach an old dog new tricks,” I believe that it would be easier to train the young population on how to be ecologically mindful than to attempt to change the everyday routines of the established population. I believe that by making eco-friendly practices a normal part of a teenager’s routine, upcoming populations would progressively become more sustainable and ecological. For instance, teaching kids how to properly discard trash and recycle makes them more likely to continue this habit. If ecology and environmental studies were a compulsory part of a student’s curriculum, I believe that children will grow up to be more ecologically mindful and refrain from doing activities that further accelerate the damage caused by global warming.

To measure the impact caused by my “Green Schools” plan, I would demand schools to participate in various environmental conservation plans and keep detailed logs of their

contributions. For example, if schools decide to transition to green energy to satisfy the curriculum, I would measure the decrease in greenhouse gas emissions from the school to determine the success rate. Another way to measure the impact would be by calculating the increase in recycling in the community compared to previous years. I believe that this would show significant growth in eco-friendliness as the years progress.

Global warming will inevitably worsen over the years. However, I believe that we have the power to either cause more damage or stop it from occurring. Northeastern Pennsylvania is full of picturesque landscapes, astonishing fauna, and breathtaking flora, and it is our duty to protect the beautiful region in which we live in. Therefore, next time you find yourself walking through flooded streets or melting in the scorching sun, think about the ways you can help stop global warming from destroying our local ecosystem.