

WPSA Climate Action Committee

The Western Political Science Association has long been known for its leadership in the field of environmental studies. For the 2019 meeting in San Diego, the association chose as its conference theme ["The Politics of Climate Change."](#) The conference hosted twenty-six panels and a keynote address (by University of California President Janet Napolitano) devoted to the topic.

During the conference, the WPSA Executive Council approved the creation of a twelve-member [Climate Action Committee](#), charged with the mission of reducing the association's contributions to climate change while maximizing its scholarly value. The Committee's focus has been on finding ways to reduce conference-related air travel, by far the greatest contributor to greenhouse gas emissions. As part of this work, the Committee is exploring ways to reduce WPSA's carbon footprint by 50% by 2030.

Shortly after its creation, the Committee surveyed WPSA members to learn their views on climate change and conference activity, and in November 2019 it published a statement on ["The Climate Conference, Academic Conferences, and the Western Political Science Association."](#)

The Committee has secured WPSA approval of two important initiatives. The first is the creation of a [Virtual Communities Program](#) that brings WPSA members together online throughout the year for purposes of intellectual exchange and professional development. At present, the program hosts eight virtual communities devoted to the following topics: Contemporary Feminist Political Theory, Critical Disability Studies, Critical Whiteness Studies, Embodied Social Change and Healing Justice, Environmental Political Theory, Inclusive Teaching and Pedagogy, Interpretive Methods in Political Science, and Political Theory.

The second initiative is the creation of a Climate Action Fund, supported through a modest conference registration fee and used "to support projects, initiatives, and policies that will help the Western Political Science Association lower its climate impact while maximizing its scholarly value." The Committee proposes Climate Action Fund expenditures for approval by the WPSA Executive Council. Some of these funds have been used to support the Virtual Communities Program.

The Climate Action Committee is mindful of the conclusion of the UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change that in order to avert catastrophic harm, the world must lower greenhouse gas emissions by 45% by 2030 and reduce them to

net zero by 2050. Large organizations like the WPSA should not hold themselves exempt from the collective response needed to meet this challenge.

The challenge is one that will require the coordinated efforts of political science associations, universities, and individuals. The Climate Action Committee invites help and advice from all members of the Western Political Science Association as we work to meet this challenge while maximizing the scholarly value of the WPSA.