



The city of Long Beach, in partnership with the Long Beach Community Investment Company (LBCIC) and Century Housing, in April celebrated the groundbreaking of Anchor Place, a 120-unit supportive housing development for homeless families and veterans. (Courtesy photo)

By Ryan Wiggins

Posted: 05/06/16, 10:27 AM PDT | Updated: 2 days ago

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As a professional who has dedicated my career to stopping climate change, my reasons are straightforward — a healthy environment and a chance for future generations to live happy, prosperous lives.

As a veteran I have some more personal reasons.

During my time in the Navy I deployed twice to the Persian Gulf. I was lucky: I came back alive and physically, mentally and emotionally whole. The same can't be said for countless thousands of our service members — including some of my friends — who have lost their lives or are suffering from PTSD and physical trauma that will last a lifetime.

So when I go to work every day it is not just to keep carbon emissions out of the sky and protect our climate, but also because the less we depend on fossil fuels the less need there is to put our service members in harm's way. A world free from oil and fossil fuel dependence will be a more peaceful, safe and just world.

That's why I'm proud that here in California, we continue to be on the front lines of the global fight against climate change.

In 2006, California passed AB 32, which sets an ambitious goal of reducing greenhouse gases to 1990 levels by 2020. Billions of dollars from big polluters are funding environmental projects around California (there are several in Long Beach) that will significantly reduce greenhouse gas emissions, create jobs, improve public health and protect some of our most vulnerable groups — veterans included.

Recently I participated in the groundbreaking of the Anchor Place transit-oriented housing development in Long Beach. It is partially funded by a \$2 million award from California's climate program and will provide affordable homes for veterans, comprehensive supportive services, and because of its proximity to improved transit service will also increase veterans' access to jobs, education, and key facilities such as the VA hospital. In addition to these social benefits, it will also reduce greenhouse gas emissions by over 28,000 metric tons and reduce gasoline usage by 3.2 million gallons.

Anchor Place is one of 36 projects in Los Angeles County that received funding in 2015 to help create affordable, healthy, transit-oriented communities. These projects (which received a total of \$117 million) will provide jobs, enhance access to opportunity for veterans and other people, and improve our quality of life.

The Anchor Place project epitomizes the beauty of California's climate program.

We are investing in a future where we can live without the threat of climate change. We are eliminating our dependence on resources that threaten national and global security and put our service members in harms way. We are honoring our veterans by serving those who have already sacrificed so much.



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And we're just getting started. Over the next year, more than \$3 billion will be invested throughout California in a wide variety of projects and programs. But unfortunately this is not set in stone: unless the California Legislature passes legislation to extend our efforts to fight climate change before 2020, these efforts could be in jeopardy.

Picture a future in California with clean air, the best public transit, safe streets, trees and parks, and vibrant, affordable neighborhoods for all. Picture a world that is free from dependence on oil and conflicts over fossil fuels are a distant memory. This goal is within our reach.

Now is the time for our legislative leaders to extend our efforts to fight climate change, protect our communities and secure a more sustainable and peaceful future.

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