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# Crowds in San Diego, across nation protest Trump policies at People's Climate March



The climate march, which originated in 2014 with a massive demonstration in New York City, was timed this year to coincide with President Donald Trump's 100th day in office.



By **Joshua Emerson Smith**

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**T**housands of activists and concerned citizens carrying signs, banners and papier-mâché puppets rallied along San Diego's waterfront on Saturday for the People's Climate [March](#), joining some 300 sister marches across the country demanding the [Trump](#) Administration take action on climate change.

The marquee event in Washington, D.C., drew the largest crowd as tens of thousands of demonstrators made their way down Pennsylvania Avenue in sweltering heat to encircle the [White House](#). That event drew big

names, including former Vice President Al Gore and actor Leonardo DiCaprio. In Chicago, marchers headed from the city's federal plaza to Trump Tower.

In San Diego, police estimated as many as 5,000 people attended Saturday's event.

The colorful atmosphere contrasted last weekend's March for Science, which featured a [larger turnout of about 15,000](#) in San Diego but more restrained tenor. Folks with the People's Climate March differentiated themselves from the previous event with a strident and aggressive message opposing the president, who marked his 100th day in office Saturday.

"Let's not say it's the hundredth day of Trump. It's the hundredth day of resistance, and it's not going to stop," said state Assemblywoman Lorena Gonzalez Fletcher to a cheering crowd at the Waterfront Park in San Diego.

"I'm here today for my four kids ... because they need to have a planet for their children and their grandchildren, and if we don't continue to act through this administration and beyond, that just won't happen," she added.

The focus on Trump was not necessarily intentional, with the march's national coordinator, Paul Gestos, saying the event was planned before the election.

The climate march, which originated in 2014 with a massive demonstration in New York, was perhaps the most confrontational yet as environmental activists and scientists have become enraged by what they view as the administration's antipathy toward action on global warming.

In the most recent example, the Environmental Protection Agency announced Friday that it is removing from its website data about greenhouse gas emissions, as well as information about the Obama administration's plan to limit carbon pollution from power plants.

Trump has called climate change a "hoax," and he and his administration have mirrored other skeptics who question whether scientists have exaggerated the degree of damage caused by humans. In a statement for Earth Day last week, the president emphasized his commitment "to keeping our air and water clean, to preserving our forests, lakes, and open spaces, and to protecting endangered species."

He added that he is seeking to strike a balance: "Economic growth enhances environmental protection. We can and must protect our environment without harming America's working families. That is why my Administration is reducing unnecessary burdens on American workers and American companies, while being mindful that our actions must also protect the environment.

"Rigorous science is critical to my Administration's efforts to achieve the twin goals of economic growth and

environmental protection. My Administration is committed to advancing scientific research that leads to a better understanding of our environment and of environmental risks. As we do so, we should remember that rigorous science depends not on ideology, but on a spirit of honest inquiry and robust debate.”

The march comes as the administration grapples with whether to remain in the Paris climate agreement.

“This is important, and I’m here in solidarity with the people marching in Washington, D.C.,” said Hannah Reynolds, 26, at the San Diego rally. “I want more people to realize that this is an important issue right now, and that we can’t just step aside and say, ‘Oh, somebody else will deal with it.’”

Around 11 a.m., people strode down the waterfront chanting, playing music and carrying signs. Signage included everything from attacks on Trump to dire warnings about the future fate of the planet, including: “What We do to the Earth, We do to Ourselves,” “Save the EPA,” “Ban Fracking” and “Keep Ur [Tiny](#) Orange Hands off Our Planet.”

Following the march, people returned to Waterfront Park for additional speakers, music and other activities. Against the backdrop of political activism, children had their faces painted and many played in the park’s fountain area and jungle gym.

“I’m here to tell you that, yes, the scientific consensus is very, very strong. It’s built on a mound of overwhelming evidence,” Jeff Severinghaus, a paleoclimatologist at Scripps Institution of Oceanography, told the crowd. “Literally, we are cooking ourselves. This is a serious issue.”

SanDiego350, one of the organizers of the event, along with a number of other local environmental groups, called on protesters to not only oppose Trump’s agenda but to think about issues closer to home. Specifically, they rallied around Gonzalez Fletcher’s [new bill to reform](#) the regional transportation agency, the San Diego Association of Governments.

Under the bill, public transit agencies in San Diego County could ask voters for new taxes to beef up trolley and bus operations in their own service areas. Floating such levies is currently under the purview of SANDAG, but public trust in the agency has [eroded](#) of late and the agency is under an internal investigation.

“One of the primary reasons for being out here today is to get our elected officials to listen to us,” said Bill Wellhouse, a steering committee member of SanDiego350. “We have our calls to action so that people have something that they can go home and do.”

The county Board of Supervisors has expressed opposition to the measure, saying they weren’t consulted while it was being drafted and that county issues such as this should be decided locally, not in Sacramento.

Organizers also promoted the adoption of an alternative energy program known as [community choice](#)

[aggregation](#) that allows local governments to buy their own electricity, including from renewable energy sources, rather than rely on a utility like San Diego Gas & Electric.

The city of San Diego is exploring such a program, and those at the march were encouraged to contact Mayor Kevin Faulconer on the issue. The City Council is expected this fall to take up the community choice proposal, which is included in the city's nationally recognized Climate Action Plan as a path to satisfying a legally binding pledge of using 100 percent renewable energy by 2035.

Many at the rally expressed heated feelings about the president but said they were unaware of the local issues.

“This is a good venue to learn about those local issues,” said Kirsten McNamara.

“I wanted to show my support for the resistance to Donald Trump's policies against the Earth and global warming,” added the 52-year-old, who said she has attended several other rallies so far this year.

Hami Ramani, 33, said he was aware of the local politics and planned to look into them further after the event. He also said he volunteers with a San Diego chapter of Indivisible, the left-wing grassroots movement focusing on electoral politics in response to the [Tea Party](#).

“I think Lorena Gonzalez Fletcher's bill makes sense, at least at the surface level,” he said. “I think we need better public transportation. We need better bicycle infrastructure. We need better walking infrastructure.”

Dozens of organizations supported the local event, including Environmental Health Coalition, San Diego County Surfrider Foundation, ACLU of San Diego and Imperial Counties, International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local 569, St. Paul's Cathedral and Social Justice Ministry of the Unitarian Universalist Church of San Diego.

*Union-Tribune wire services contributed to this report.*

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