



**For Immediate Release**

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**El Paso Climate Charter Coalition responds to misinformation about the Climate Charter from the El Paso Chamber of Commerce and El Paso Hispanic Chamber of Commerce.**

El Paso’s fossil fuel industry and corporate interests are leveraging intimidation tactics and disinformation to mislead El Pasoans, and most notably, small business owners on the El Paso Climate Charter. Contrary to the Chambers’ controversial and baseless conclusions, the El Paso Climate Charter will (1) create and secure jobs, (2) ensure a just and equitable transition to renewable energy in El Paso, and (3) prioritize the holistic well-being, needs, and voices of community members.

We should not be surprised by corporate polluters’ opposition. Their intentional defamation of the Climate Charter by publishing libels in the form of a “Study” and a misguided poll survey provide false, inaccurate conclusions on the impact of the Climate Charter to the community. The El Paso Chamber of Commerce’s solicited “Study” includes a fear-inducing and intimidating statistic related to job loss across El Paso’s labor market that is unrelated, irrelevant, and an impossible outcome of the Climate Charter.

The El Paso Hispanic Chamber of Commerce created a poll survey for its paid members to respond to based on disinformation (inaccurate and false information) regarding the Climate Charter, and based on the results, the poll contained questions irrelevant to the final Climate Charter policy ballot language, misleading EPHCC members and the public.

***COMMUNITY QUOTES***

“The El Paso Hispanic Chamber of Commerce has produced an illegitimate survey that mischaracterizes the Climate Charter and misleads surveyed business owners into believing disinformation about Proposition K. The Climate Charter enforces a transition to clean renewable energy generated from our electrical grid, not specific to heating generation, which means El Pasoans would not need to transition to electric appliances, as this is simply not part of the Climate Charter measure. The onus is on our electric utility, El Paso Electric Co., who

must make big changes and shut down their polluting, climate-destroying, asthma-causing gas plants as quickly as possible. EPE should follow through with their promise to transition El Paso’s energy generation to 100% clean renewable energy by 2045.”

— Christian Marquardt, Communications Coordinator, El Paso Climate Charter

“The Climate Charter establishes positive goals including building solar on City buildings and creating jobs for a sustainable, renewable energy economy. Both El Paso Chamber’s study and the Hispanic Chamber’s survey are filled with fabrications and are funded by Big Oil interests that want to prevent El Paso from taking meaningful climate action.”

— Mike Siegel, Political Director, Ground Game Texas

### ***DEBUNKING MISINFORMATION***

- [Chambers tied to fossil fuel corporate polluters](#)
- [\(1\) Gas stove disinformation](#)
- [\(2\) Electric vehicle disinformation](#)
- [\(3\) Utility Renewable Energy Goals](#)
- [\(4\) Small Business Benefit](#)
- [\(5\) Climate Job Prosperity](#)
- [\(6\) Lower Utility Rates](#)
- [\(7\) Not Expensive](#)
- [\(8\) Municipalization Process](#)
- [\(9\) Fluid Community Input](#)
- [Hispanic Chamber Survey is invalid](#)
- [El Paso Chamber “Study” is inaccurate](#)

**High-level consideration: Both El Paso Chamber of Commerce and the El Paso Hispanic Chamber of Commerce are deeply tied to the area’s fossil fuel industry and El Paso’s worst corporate polluters.**

*Both Chambers have strong ties to the fossil fuel industry.*

- Kelly Tomblin, CEO of El Paso Electric Co., is on the Board of Directors for both El Paso Chamber of Commerce and the El Paso Hispanic Chamber of Commerce.
- Marathon Petroleum Corporation is a member of the El Paso Chamber of Commerce.
- Texas Gas Service is a member of the El Paso Chamber of Commerce; Elizabeth O’Hara, Regional Manager of Community Relations for Texas Gas Service, is on the Board of Directors for the El Paso Chamber of Commerce.
- ONEOK Inc., a fossil fuel company, is a member of the El Paso Chamber of Commerce.
- 21 out of 23 people on the Board of Directors for the El Paso Chamber of Commerce have indisputable, direct ties to the fossil fuel industry and wealthy property developers affiliated with the fossil fuel industry in El Paso.

*El Paso's two worst corporate polluters are El Paso Electric Co. and Marathon Petroleum Corporation—who both have direct ties to both Chambers of Commerce.*

- El Paso Electric Co. operates and profits from the area's three major Newman, Montana Vista, Rio Grande gas plants which pollute VOCs, NO<sub>x</sub>, and CO<sub>2</sub>.
- Marathon Petroleum Corporation operates and profits from the El Paso Refinery which pollutes VOCs, NO<sub>x</sub>, and CO<sub>2</sub>.
- Pollution from these four major fossil fuel infrastructures largely contribute to El Paso being the 12th worst polluted city in the United States for ozone.

**(1) The Climate Charter will NOT force El Paso households, small businesses, or privately-owned establishments to switch their gas stoves to electric**

Corporate polluters' false claim: "Homes would have to use electric stoves not only that but have solar panels installed"

The reality: The Climate Charter explicitly states in Section 9.9 - Renewable Energy Goals that:

*"The City of El Paso shall employ all available methods to require that energy used within the City is generated by clean renewable energy, with the goals of requiring (1) 80% clean renewable energy by 2030 and (2) 100% clean renewable energy by 2045."*

The key language in Section 9.9 is "*shall employ all available methods to require that energy used within the City is generated by clean renewable energy*". This language in the policy refers to the energy sourcing of El Paso's electrical grid— whereas the Chamber describes households and small businesses as responsible for this transition to clean renewable energy. The onus is placed on El Paso Electric Co. to transition our grid effectively, efficiently, and equitably to clean renewable energy.

Energy used and generated within the City is not equal to heating generated within the City. *Heat generation* should not be confused with *energy generation* in this clause of the Climate Charter measure. There are no restrictions being implemented, suggested, or required by the Climate Charter related to appliances.

**(2) The Climate Charter will NOT force El Pasoans or businesses to transition to Electric Vehicles**

Corporate polluters' false claim: "Truck companies would have to make their fleet of vehicles to electric cars which would cost billions of dollars" El Paso Hispanic Chamber of Commerce.

The reality: The Climate Charter policy does not state, or even remotely suggest, a transition to Electric Vehicles in any capacity. One tactic the Chambers are using is to heavily

mischaracterize the Climate Charter’s utility Renewable Energy Goals (Section 9.9). As explained above, these clean *energy* requirements refer to the utility grid, not transportation methods of household heating.

**(3) The Climate Charter’s Renewable Energy Goals are not strict or legally binding–but instead policy goals which the Climate Department would *encourage*, not *require*. The goals should not be controversial since they are similar to El Paso Electric Co.’s own energy goals.**

Corporate polluters’ false claim: The Chambers’ supposed justification for both of the claims above are rooted in their extremist misinterpretation of the Renewable Energy Goals. In both cases, Chambers falsely conflate a policy *goal* with a policy *requirement*.

The reality: The language of the Climate Charter vitally says the “City of El Paso shall employ all *available* methods” to reach the stated renewable energy goals. This means the Climate Department would not be allowed to overreach its legal, political power to achieve these goals. Both Chambers are using this extremist interpretation to justify their arguments that the Climate Department would “cost millions.” The Climate Charter Renewable Energy Goals should not be controversial for El Paso Electric since the company itself has promoted the community to be “80% carbon-free by 2035 and 100% decarbonized by 2045”.

**(4) The Climate Charter will BENEFIT small business, family business–not hurt them**

Corporate polluters’ false claim: Small businesses will suffer from the Climate Charter “If this amendment is approved, El Paso will regress and no business will want to relocate to El Paso. Businesses may even leave El Paso and move into the county, this amendment is not what El Paso needs to move toward moving forward with climate change.” El Paso Hispanic Chamber of Commerce.

The reality: The Climate Charter gets us closer to reduced electricity rates overall; increases the affordability of rooftop solar; and protects small businesses/family businesses as a community which should not be disproportionately burdened by the transition to renewable energy.

- **Publicly owned utilities would substantially drive down electricity costs.** According to the [American Public Power Association](#), “residential customers of public power utilities pay monthly bills that are on average 4% less than customers of investor-owned utilities.”
- **The Climate Charter policy program would make rooftop solar more affordable, again driving down electricity costs for businesses and making it possible for the utility to PAY businesses for their rooftop solar.** Section 9.13 of the policy titled “ELIMINATION OF IMPEDIMENTS TO RENEWABLE ENERGY” reads “The City shall not impose any fees, fines, or other financial or nonfinancial burdens that

limit the purchase, use, or generation of renewable energy. Any such fees, fines, or other burdens in existence at the time this charter amendment takes effect are hereby null and void, including but not limited to interconnection fees.”

- **Small businesses/family businesses, low-income working class communities would be especially protected from suffering disproportionate impacts of climate change and a transition to renewable energy.** The overarching principle of the Climate Charter document (Section 9.1) governs each aspect of the policy. It reads: “It is the policy of the City of El Paso to use all available resources and authority to accomplish three goals of paramount importance: first, to reduce the City’s contribution to climate change; second, to invest in an environmentally sustainable future; and third, to advance the cause of *climate justice*.” Section 9.1.C Climate Policy defines “climate justice” as “ensuring that historically underserved communities do not bear a disproportionate share of the negative impacts of climate change.” Using the “Climate Justice” general policy principle, the Climate Department has the authority to determine small businesses, family-owned businesses as “historically underserved communities.”
- **New Climate Justice economy opportunities.** As the Climate Department is legally tasked with creating new climate jobs (Section 9.7), a new “climate justice economy” would flourish. This creates new economic opportunities for our community which center around improving our City’s health, climate, environment, and sustainability. The result is a flourishing of economic opportunities for businesses to contribute to this climate justice economy.

#### **(5) The Climate Charter will result in job increases, job transitions, job protections, and improved workers’ interests**

Corporate polluters’ false claim: The Climate Charter will result in job losses and negative impacts to the economy.

The reality: While the Climate Charter advocates for the shut down of El Paso Electric gas plants, it promotes an increase of jobs and an increase of worker protections.

- **Climate Jobs:** Currently, it is within the power of El Paso Electric and Marathon Petroleum Corporation to unjustly fire their fossil fuel workers—without the Climate Charter in place. However, with the Climate Charter in place, we create a new level of protections for fossil fuel workers to transition to a green economy that would result from the Climate Jobs program of this ballot initiative (Section 9.7). The Climate Jobs mandate allows for the development of a “climate justice economy”—a flourishing of job opportunities towards projects that improve our communities health and environment.
- **Climate Justice Principle:** As outlined in point (4), the entirety of the Climate Charter requires that Climate Department actions be executed using the principle of “climate justice,” protecting historically underserved communities. The Climate Director holds the authority to define gas plant and refinery workers as part of this

classification. (These workers are unjustly exposed to the dangerous toxins associated with gas plant and refinery pollution).

**(6) The Climate Charter gets us closer to reduced utility rates for El Pasoans**

Corporate polluters' false claim: The Climate Charter can result in “potentially increasing the cost of electricity and making service less reliable.” El Paso Hispanic Chamber of Commerce.

The reality: Until our grid becomes a municipal owned utility, the sole entity which has the power to increase or decrease electricity is El Paso Electric Co. Currently the public has no decision-making power in determining utility rates. The Climate Charter’s Municipalization goal (Section 9.10) pushes for increased community power in determining our utility rates. As outlined in section (4), municipalizing our grid results in lower rates for residents.

**(7) The Climate Charter is NOT expensive, it does NOT disproportionately affect businesses.**

Corporate polluters' false claim: The Chambers mischaracterize the Climate Charter as an overreaching, unreasonable, expensive program.

The reality: The Climate Charter requires the allocation of thousands of tax dollars to create a Climate Department and fulfill its duties—not millions as the Chambers portray. As the cost of any government program, the cost would be shared by a tax-base which is diverse. It would not specifically, disproportionately hurt businesses. This cost does not necessarily mean a tax increase, it could be accomplished from a reallocation of the City Government’s existing tax revenue.

**(8) The Climate Charter would not result in the immediate “purchase” of El Paso Electric. It is only the beginning of a process of municipalization.**

Corporate polluters' false claim: Voting yes on Prop K will result in the immediate purchase of El Paso Electric and cost billions of dollars.

The reality: The Climate Charter will begin the process of estimating the purchase value of the utility by conducting a feasibility study, but the Climate Charter does not immediately force the municipalization/public purchase of the utility. The Climate Charter specifies:

“The City of El Paso shall [1] **employ all available efforts** to convert El Paso Electric to municipal ownership.

In consultation with the Climate Director, the City Manager shall provide the City Council with [2] **an annual report to describe the feasibility** of converting El Paso Electric into a municipal electric company, including [3] **any actions required to advance this objective.**”

- a) **“Employ all available efforts”**: if efforts are made to convert EPE into municipal ownership, but the purchase of the utility is not possible, the purchase is not made.
- b) **“An annual report to describe the feasibility”**: the feasibility study is the sole piece required in this section of the measure.
- c) **“Any actions required to advance this objective”**: the described actions required to advance the conversion of El Paso Electric to municipal ownership suggest what is needed to complete the conversion of the utility. If what is required is not available to advance the objective, then utility is not purchased.

**(9) The Climate Charter is NOT a rigid policy; it requires consistent community input—especially of underserved communities like frontline communities most affected by pollution, small businesses, family businesses.**

*Corporate polluters’ false claim*: The Climate Charter is a rigid document that would “lock us into” a policy program that would not allow community input.

*The reality*: The Climate Charter has multiple mechanisms which allow for City Council and the general public to participate in the shaping the direction, scope, and strategy of the Climate Department—namely the Climate Director position and the Climate Commission

- The Climate Director—tasked with executing the goals of the Climate Charter—must be appointed by the City Council, a democratically elected body. This allows El Paso’s voters to provide input in the selection of a Climate Director through its representatives. (Section 9.3)
- The Climate Commission (Section 9.14) exists “for the purposes of overseeing the implementation and fulfillment of the City’s Climate Policy.” The Commission consists of nine El Paso residents appointed by City Councilors and Mayor, with a preference towards community members affected by climate change. This body comprised directly of community members would serve as a check on the power of the Climate Director. This Commission will provide consistent input into the Climate Department to ensure the full Climate Policy is enacted effectively and justly.

**The El Paso Hispanic Chamber of Commerce blatantly mischaracterized the Climate Charter policy when surveying their audiences; therefore, their survey results should not be considered as valid.**

The Climate Charter is vastly popular among El Pasoans. Our campaign gathered the signatures of nearly 40,000 El Pasoans who support every clause of the Climate Charter program— including families, businesses, and a wide diversity of community members. If the Climate Charter was not popular— even among businesses— we would not have been able to receive this many signatures in support.

Nonetheless, the El Paso Hispanic Chamber of Commerce is attempting to manufacture inaccurate evidence to create the illusion that the Climate Charter is not popular among businesses. To do this, the Chamber created a distorted, inaccurate, boogeyman version of the Climate Charter and asked their membership to weigh in. We will outline how each question the Hispanic Chamber presented portrays an inaccurate version of the actual Climate Charter to preemptively prompt a negative response from their membership.

### ***SURVEY QUESTION CLARIFICATIONS***

**Question 1 clarification:** The vague “green friendly” is undefined, not relevant to the Climate Charter and used to fear-monger their membership. Inaccurately, the Chamber is presumably extrapolating the utility Renewable Energy Goals to transportation and home appliances. *See: (1) Gas Stoves; and (3) Utility Renewable Energy Goals*

*Question 1: “We all agree climate change is occurring -and steps are already taking place to address this issue in our community. But under this charter businesses and homes would be expected to become 80% “green friendly.” Currently there is no cost estimate to make homes “green friendly.” With the economy where it is do you feel that you would be able to meet this requirement by 2030?”*

**Question 2 clarification:** The Climate Charter does not require the replacement of gas stoves. *See (1) Gas Stoves*

*Question 2: “Many industries, including the restaurant businesses and the general public, prefer the use of gas stoves. Most homes also use gas water heaters and furnaces to heat their homes. But under the proposed Climate Charter by 2030 you would not be able to use gas, you would need to switch to electric. Do you feel that the City should be able to possibly cite and fine you for the home appliances you choose to use?”*

**Question 3 clarification:** It is incorrect to say that El Paso small businesses would “pay for the majority of the cost.” To the contrary, the “Climate Justice” (9.1.C) principle of the policy would prohibit small businesses/family businesses/underserved communities from suffering disproportionately from climate change consequences or mitigation. *See (1) Gas Stoves; (2) Electric Vehicles; (4) Small Business Benefit; (5) Climate Job Prosperity*

*Question 3: “As of right now the proposed Climate Charter is unfunded -potentially making El Paso businesses pay for the majority of the cost. This means small*

*businesses, like you, would be expected to fund these changes mentioned in the Climate Charter. Can you afford to make these changes right now?"*

**Question 4 clarification:** The Climate Charter would not increase the utility rates—that is entirely within the decision-making power of El Paso Electric Co. Reversely, the Climate Charter gets our community closer to control over our electric grid, and closer to our ability to reduce electric rates. *See (6) Lower Utility Rates; (7) Not Expensive*

*Question 4: "The proposed Climate Charter would ban the sale of water to any fossil fuel energy company outside of city limits. El Paso Electric has one of their largest plants outside of the City limits, meaning that they would need to obtain water from other sources or close the plant down, potentially increasing the cost of electricity and making service less reliable. Do you think that this is in the best interest of El Paso community?"*

**Question 5 clarification:** Voting "yes" on the climate charter does not result in the immediate purchase of the electric utility. It is inaccurate to say the Charter will cost \$9B—it costs only thousands of dollars to establish the Climate Department. Additionally, if the City did decide to purchase the utility, its cost has not been determined. The feasibility study proposed by the Climate Charter would account for devaluation of infrastructure and investments to determine an unbiased, neutral cost estimate. *See (7) Not Expensive; (8) Municipalization Process*

*Question 5: "El Paso Electric is not for sale but in the Climate Charter it states that the City would aggressively attempt to buy it. If El Paso Electric is bought, with the estimated price tag of \$9 billion, it would mean a tax increase on all El Paso residents. Most importantly lower and fixed income families, who struggle already to pay their bills. Would a tax increase affect your ability to meet your monthly bills?"*

**Question 6 clarification:** This is simply incorrect. The Climate Jobs section (9.7-2) of the policy promotes a "preference for climate jobs when new funding becomes available." Preference, not requirement. The policy states that such funds would be allocated responsibly and in accordance to the City's needs. The policy states the jobs would be allocated "whenever such jobs are consistent with funding requirements, City needs, and available resources."

*Question 6: "The Climate Charter clearly states that when ANY funding comes into El Paso that they will first be used to create climate jobs before that money can be routed to El Pasoan's immediate needs. Do you feel that the City of El Paso should first, before anything else, put all funds towards meeting the goals within this proposed Climate Charter?"*

**Question 7 clarification:** El Paso pollution in fact does affect Ciudad Juárez, Chih., México. Particularly the pollution from the El Paso Refinery (closely on the border) does impact the respiratory health of the people of Ciudad Juárez.

*Question 7: “These changes would not have any effect on businesses or activities in Ciudad Juarez. Do you believe, in light of that, that these changes would have any significant impact on the environment in our region?”*

**The El Paso Chamber of Commerce “study” also mischaracterizes the Climate Charter.**

Similar to the Hispanic Chambers tactic, the El Paso Chamber misrepresented the Climate Charter in their study in order to produce outlandish, inaccurate conclusions regarding the economic impact of the Climate Charter. They used virtually all of the misinformation tactics included in the document (1), (2), (3), (4), (5), (6), (7), (8), (9) to manufacture an inaccurate version of the Climate Charter which is unflattering and distorted.

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