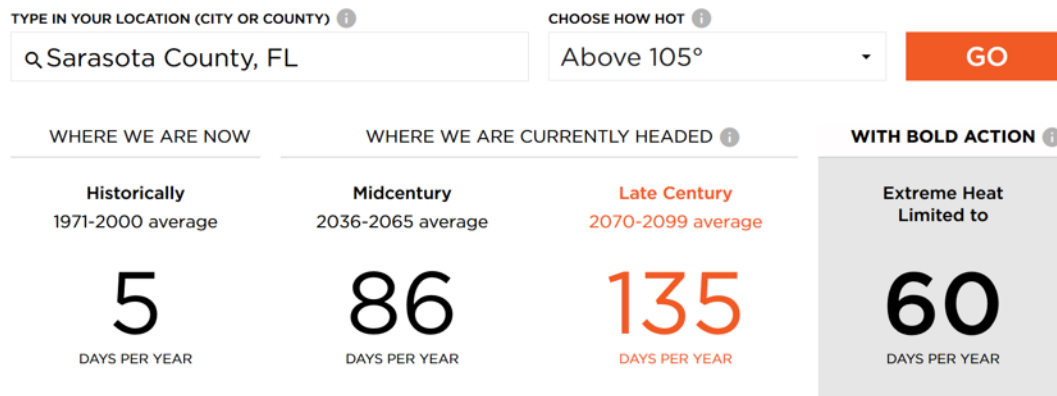


Killer Heat and the Fall Election

William “Coty” Keller

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Southwest Florida, the nation and the world are facing a stark choice with the climate crisis. The Union of Concerned Scientist’s (UCS) *Killer Heat in the United States* report can help us understand the consequences of our actions. When we go to www.ucsusa.org/killer-heat and click on Sarasota county, here’s what we get:



The choice is clear: We can limit future extreme heat events but we must take bold action **now** to address the climate crisis.

If we do nothing, as early as 2036 Sarasota County would experience an average of 86 days per year with a heat index above 105°F. That’s 17 times the historical average of 5 days a year. In our lifetime, we could experience almost 3 months a year with a climate like the Sonoran Desert. Beyond that, our children and grandchildren would experience, as early as 2070, an average of 135 days (4 ½ months) per year with a heat index above 105°F. This includes: 21 days with an off-the-charts heat index. This kind of extreme heat is more than uncomfortable, inconvenient and expensive, it is a major health risk. “We would be seeing people — climate refugees — fleeing Florida,” said economics professor Mark Paul at New College of Florida.

If we take bold action NOW, we can limit the increase in extreme heat in Sarasota County to an average of 60 days per year with a heat index above 105°F. The choice is clear. The coming election is an opportunity to select candidates at the federal, state and local level who will pledge to take what the UCS calls *bold action*. Let’s define this term.

Addressing climate change requires action in two areas: adaptation and mitigation. Adaptation (aka resiliency) is the process of adjusting to anticipated changes by protecting existing infrastructure, homes, and people from rising seas, fires, and stronger weather. Mitigation directs efforts towards solving the cause by reducing heat-trapping emissions and removing carbon already in the atmosphere. Resistance to mitigation is dangerous, especially for Florida. For example, while Florida’s Governor has acknowledged climate change exists, the title for the new climate change director is “Chief Resilience Officer”, reflecting the state’s focus on adaptation. We must go beyond adaptation and resiliency.

Without mitigation, the climate will continue to change and long-term impacts (Killer Heat) will become too severe to manage.

Scientists estimate that we must implement significant climate mitigation actions and policies within 10 years or rapid natural processes, such as melting of the permafrost and associated methane release, will render us incapable of slowing the uncontrollable heating of our planet. Critical mitigation goals include: 1) reducing emissions by 70-100% by 2030 through conservation and transition to non-emitting energy sources; and 2) removing excess carbon from the atmosphere by reforestation and soil management.

Bold action is defined as radical mitigation in terms of scope and timing.

Actions by businesses and individuals are needed. But the most leverage comes from federal, state, and local governments applying their authorities with these bold actions:

- Federal – 1) Globally coordinated action, including as a minimum participation in the Paris Agreement. 2) Enact a national law (such as HR 763) which establishes a rising price on carbon and returns revenues to households, thereby reducing emissions, benefitting the economy, and improving public health. Returning the money to families avoids a regressive tax burden on lower income households. 3) Pandemic economic recovery plans that create millions of jobs in zero-emission and carbon-sequestration industries.
- State – Adopt regulations which: 1) require energy providers to create low-carbon energy portfolios with 100% zero emission electricity by 2030; 2) prohibit utilities from earning higher profits from selling more electricity, and require them to focus on improving service, conservation and reducing emissions; 3) eliminate barriers to rooftop solar energy; and 4) ban Fracking
- Local – 1) Implement building codes, landscaping and farming rules, and public transportation policies which conserve, sequester and transition to zero emission fuels. 2) The state has mandated all counties to update their Comprehensive Plans by 2021 to take sea level rise and climate change into account. County plans should aim for emissions to be reduced by 70-100% by 2030 and reforestation & soil management that radically stores more carbon.

We face a stark choice. To avoid the worst of Killer Heat and the other ravages of climate change we need bold action. Let's tell candidates for office that to earn our votes, they must pledge to support the bold actions identified here.

William "Coty" Keller is an ecologist, working to conserve and restore the natural relationships among living things and the environment. He lives and works in Port Charlotte, Florida. www.ecopapak.org