

# Tompkins students join D.C. climate conference

*By Tim Ashmore*

This weekend 10,000 student activists are expected to descend on Washington, D.C., to lobby Congress for tougher environmental standards, and Ithaca-area students won't miss the chance to advocate.

The Tompkins County crowd, about 160 students ages 16-21, this weekend will join what's being called Power Shift 2009 - a continuation of last year's Power Shift 2008, when more than double the expected number of students turned out for a similar conference at the Capitol, said Dominic Frongillo, a Town of Caroline councilman and environmental activist.

Frongillo, 25, traveled with SustainUS, a national environmental group, to Bali, Indonesia, in 2007 for a United Nations summit on climate change. He said he's connected to Power Shift through SustainUS as well.

Frongillo wrote in an e-mail that the effort at the Capitol recognizes the need for the U.S. to play a larger role in urging global climate change than it did under President George W. Bush.

And after the youth vote proved its political worth by helping to elect President Barack Obama, Frongillo hopes the group's value can make a difference on climate change, too.

"The goal is to get one young person at least from every Congressional district in the nation," he said. "It will send the message that this is something every Congressman and -woman needs to be aware of. This is a political force to be reckoned with."

As evidence of this, Frongillo said he's told that staff on Capitol Hill are paying attention to the It's Getting Hot in Here blog on climate change - [itsgettinghotinhere.org](http://itsgettinghotinhere.org) - on a regular basis.

The 10,000-person traveling advocacy group has about 300 meetings set up with Congressional representatives along with a conference with House Majority Leader Nancy Pelosi, D-California. A splinter activist group plans to take over a nearby coal plant as well, Frongillo said. He didn't indicate whether the Tompkins County group would be involved.

Students from Cornell University, Ithaca College, Wells College, Ithaca High School, Dryden High School and Lehman Alternative Community School plan to attend.

"These things combined send the message that we need bold action and that the movement that elected Barack Obama is not going away," Frongillo said. "The youth movement that elected him is not going away, in fact it's only building stronger to push for renewable energy and climate change."

The Tompkins County students traveling to Washington are asking for donations to help fund transportation costs. Donations can be made through the Cornell Center for Religion, Equality and Social Policy (CRESP) at [http://cresp.cornell.edu/get\\_involved.php](http://cresp.cornell.edu/get_involved.php).