National Caucus of Environmental Legislators

Bipartisan Climate Solutions Briefing Book

NCEL
National Caucus of
Environmental Legislators

202.744.1006 • www.ncelenviro.org • 1140 3rd St NE, Office 2137 • Washington, DC 20002

Bipartisan Climate Solutions Briefing Book

Table of Contents

NCEL
National Caucus of Environmental Legislators

202.744.1006 • www.ncelenviro.org • 1140 3rd St NE, Office 2137 • Washington, DC 20002

Introduction

In today's shifting energy and economic landscape, bipartisan support for climate and clean energy policy is more important than ever. State legislators are on the front lines of shaping climate and energy policy that directly impacts local economies, public health, and long-term resilience. Climate and clean energy initiatives offer the ability to address environmental concerns, create quality jobs, attract investment, and build a more reliable and resilient grid. Working across the aisle on climate and clean energy policy is a smart, strategic move that reflects both public will and long-term state interests.

Harnessing the benefits of the clean energy transition and addressing climate change is urgent, as the United States is already experiencing major climate impacts, including coastal destruction, extreme heat, lengthened and worsened hurricane seasons, and more.

As this briefing book details, politically diverse states are beginning to implement laws that promote cheaper, cleaner energy and address climate change. To keep this momentum progressing, politically diverse states can learn from previous successes from states with similar political contexts. There is no need to reinvent the wheel when tactics have already proven effective in neighboring or similar states. **This briefing book seeks to provide a pool of successful climate and clean energy policies in states across the country and beyond for state legislators to reference as they are looking forward to next sessions.** It was developed by NCEL staff, who surveyed policies across the nation to gather best practices and examples for a variety of political and economic contexts. We want to thank colleagues at Climate Cabinet Education, Conservation Voters of South Carolina, and Green For All for their feedback and recommendations as well.

Contents of this Briefing Book

We cover nature-based solutions, transportation, just transition and clean energy workforce, buildings, grid regionalization and utility regulation, grid modernization, clean energy, and adaptation and coastal resilience. Each section includes a description of the policy, sample legislation from states, and resources. We also include detailed analysis of a key piece of omnibus legislation, including the South Carolina Energy Freedom Act.

Climate Solutions for All States

Politically diverse states are creating tens of thousands of new jobs in the clean energy and clean transportation sectors. Residents are seeing the co-benefits of climate action including lower energy bills, better air quality, and a higher quality of life. The urgency of the climate crisis demands the most ambitious actions from all of us; but climate policy is never a one-size-fits all solution. Solutions need to cater to specific political, economic, and cultural contexts. This briefing book provides a reference point for state legislators in the region of what's worked well so far. We hope it is just the beginning.

Overview

Resilience and adaptation planning has come to the forefront as a policy that tends to have bipartisan support. Climate adaptation and resiliency measures are integral in ensuring communities can adjust to the current and projected impacts of climate change. About 87% of Americans report experiencing some kind of extreme weather events including heat waves, floods, droughts, hurricanes, or wildfires. The impacts of these events are tied to high home insurance costs, expensive recoveries, and even displacement. Climate adaptability measures include improving and retrofitting existing infrastructure, creating more green infrastructure, and improving extreme weather strategies.

Additional Resources

- **National Caucus of Environmental Legislators** - (1) Healthy Ocean & Coasts Briefing Book, (2) Climate Adaptation: Wildfires, (3) Wildfire Resilience and Preparedness Policy Options, (4) Wildfires and Insurance, and (5) Wildfires and the Grid
- **Natural Resources Defense Council -** How States Stack Up on Flood Disclosure
- **Environmental Protection Agency Smart Growth -** Regional Resilience Toolkit

Legislation

Indicates bipartisan sponsorship

- ****Florida H.B.7019/S.B.1954 (enacted 2021):** Established Resilient Florida Grant Program to fund costs of community resilience planning; required the Department of Environmental Protection to develop annual Statewide Flooding & Sea Level Rise Resilience Plan; established Florida Flood Hub for Applied Research & Innovation.
- ****Florida S.B. 948 (enacted 2025):** Mandates flood risk disclosure for landlords, sellers, developers, and park owners to disclose flood risks to prospective tenants, purchasers, and lessees of residential properties, including mobile homes and condominiums.
- ****Florida CS/H.B.7053 (enacted 2022):** Established Statewide Office of Resilience and Chief Resilience Officer; required the Department of Transportation to develop resilience action plan for State Highway System; revised vulnerability assessment requirements for non coastal communities; etc.
- ****Louisiana. H.B. 305 (enacted 2024):** Directs that the state's share of revenue from all energy production in federal waters go towards coastal restoration projects.
- ****Louisiana. H.B. 612 (enacted 2022):** Created the Louisiana Fortify Homes Program which offers grants of up to $10,000 to eligible homeowners for new roofs built with improved techniques and materials that can stop leaks and withstand winds of up to 150 mph.
- ****South Carolina S.B.0259 (enacted 2020):** Established the South Carolina Office of Resilience with a Chief Resilience Officer to develop a statewide resilience plan; created the Disaster Relief and Resilience Reserve Fund and Resilience Revolving Fund.
- **Virginia S.B.756 (enacted 2022):** Created the Resilient Virginia Revolving Fund to support loans, refinance projects, or provide grants for local governments to advance resilience endeavors.

Overview

Reducing emissions from buildings has multiple co-benefits, including lower energy bills, more insulated housing, and better indoor air quality. Reduced energy bills can be particularly beneficial to low-income households, who spend three times more of their income on energy costs compared to the median spending of non-low-income households. In the South, where residents are more cost-burdened than in any other part of the country, one out of every three people has trouble paying their energy bills.

Legislation

Indicates bipartisan sponsorship

- **Kentucky H.B.33 (enacted 2022):** Encouraged all school districts undertaking the construction of new school building to: meet or exceed efficient school design standards, use life-cycle cost analysis to evaluate different design proposals; and consider each new school building or major renovation of a building could be a net zero building.
- ****North Carolina S.802 (enacted 2024):** Created a Commercial Property Assessed Capital Expenditure (C-PACE) program to improve building resiliency and utility efficiency by allowing local governments to encourage property owners to utilize low-cost, long-term financing for energy efficiency, water conservation, and resilience projects.
- ****New Hampshire S.B.4 (enacted 2025):** Establishes a commercial property assessed clean energy and resiliency (C-PACER) program designed to facilitate financing for improvements in energy efficiency, clean energy, water conservation, and property resiliency for commercial properties.
- ****Pennsylvania H.B.1421 (enacted 2022):** Created the Whole-Home Repairs Program to pay directly for new roofs, septic systems, and other structural repairs in order for households to qualify for energy efficiency upgrades through the Weatherization Assistance Program.
- ****West Virginia H.B.2667 (enacted 2021):** Created a cost savings program for assessment and implementation of energy savings goals in state buildings; required energy-savings contracts to include provisions relating to energy cost savings guarantees and deficiency payments; established a goal to reduce all state buildings' electricity, natural gas, oil and steam energy usage by 25% below 2018 levels by 2030.

Additional Resources

- **The Greenlining Institute** - Equitable Building Electrification: A Framework for Powering Resilient Communities
- **RMI** - Gas Stoves: Health and Air Quality Impacts and Solutions
- **National Caucus of Environmental Legislators** - Building Decarbonization Issue Page
- **Green & Healthy Homes Initiative** - Leading with Equity and Justice in the Clean Energy Transition: Getting to the Starting Line for Residential Building Electrification
- **US Green Building Council** - Resources for State Legislators

Overview

Utility policy plays a pivotal role in the pursuit of climate goals and the transition from a fossil fuel-based economy to a clean energy economy. The utility sector is a primary source of greenhouse gas emissions, with the power sector contributing 25% to total U.S. emissions.

The benefits from the transition to a clean energy economy cannot be achieved without investing in an efficient, optimized, and modern grid that can effectively utilize new technologies and resources, while also responding to customer needs and decreasing customer costs. The electrical grid plays a pivotal role in the clean energy future by enabling the reliable integration, distribution, and utilization of clean energy resources on a large scale.

Legislation

Indicates bipartisan sponsorship

- **Arizona H.B.2218 (enacted 2023):** Directed the Arizona Power Authority to encourage activities for the storage of solar energy, nuclear energy or geothermal energy; authorizes the Arizona Power Authority to operate facilities to store electric power.
- **Virginia S.B.1323 (enacted 2023):** Requires the State Corporation Commission to establish annual energy efficiency savings targets for customers who are low-income, elderly, disabled, or veterans of military service.
- **Virginia S.B. 565 (enacted 2024):** Mandated investor-owned electric utilities develop energy efficiency programs with specific annual savings targets and a minimum allocation of 15% of program costs to low-income, elderly, disabled individuals, or veterans.
- **Montana H.B. 729 (enacted 2023):** Enabled the State's Public Utility Commission to approve cost-effectiveness criteria for Advanced Conductor projects that may be placed into a utility's ROI (Return on Investment) Rate Base.
- ****Texas SB 6 (enacted 2025):** Requires data centers and other large loads to register with ERCOT and provide their own back-up generation;requires data centers to disclose and receive PUC approval for generation agreements that use existing grid capacity and disclose interconnection requests in other states for the same facility;empowers ERCOT to cut power to large load users during grid emergencies.

Additional Resources

- **National Caucus of Environmental Legislators** - Utility Briefing Book, and Transmission Briefing Book
- **Solar United Neighbors** - The People's Utilities Playbook
- **National Association of Regulatory Utility Commissioners (NARUC)** - The Role of State Utility Regulators in a Just and Reasonable Energy Transition
- **National Association of Regulatory Utility Commissioners (NARUC)** - "Performance-Based Regulation: A Toolkit for Policymakers"
- **Climate and Development Lab at Brown University** - Can State PUCs Lead in the Clean Energy Transition? Lessons From Six States

NCEL
National Caucus of Environmental Legislators
202.744.1006 • www.ncelenviro.org • 1140 3rd St NE, Office 2137 • Washington, DC 20002

Overview

Driven by growing industry, AI, and extreme weather, the demand for energy continues to rise at an exponential rate across the country. With these growing energy needs, it is crucial for states to facilitate and ensure the deployment of modern grid technologies, which can help meet energy demand while not breaking the bank. Many of these technologies are hindered by outdated state-level regulations and incentives, in effect stifling deployment, competition, and continued innovation. States can help facilitate the deployment by updating out-of-date statutes, removing roadblocks, and revising incentive structures and guidance for utilities to incorporate these newer technologies and strategies.

Legislation

Indicates bipartisan sponsorship

- ****Indiana S.B. 422 (enacted 2025):** Requires utilities to consider the use of GETs and advanced reconductors in their Integrated Resource Plan (IRP). Directs the Indiana Utility Regulatory Commission to study the deployment of GETs. Clarifies that utilities can receive a rate of return for investments in GETs and advanced reconductors.
- ****Texas S.B. 1699 (enacted 2023):** Requires the Texas PUC to establish a demand reduction goal and establish a Virtual Power Plant (VPP) pilot program. Provides retail electric providers the ability to create VPP programs and authorizes the Texas PUC to establish rules for VPP providers.
- ****Texas S.B. 2627 (enacted 2023):** Established the Texas Backup Power Program, a pilot program to fund the deployment of microgrids at critical facilities, including groceries stores, gas stations, nursing homes, public safety buildings, and more.
- **Utah H.B. 212 (enacted 2025):** Requires that during transmission expansion or improvement, distribution companies must conduct cost-effectiveness and timetable analyses of GETs integration, and report to the Public Service Commission.
- **Virginia H.B.2346 (enacted 2025):** Requires the creation of a statewide Virtual Power Plant pilot program.

Additional Resources

- **National Caucus of Environmental Legislators** - (1) Utility Briefing Book, (2) Transmission Briefing Book, (3) Increasing Transmission and Grid-Enhancing Technologies (GETs)
- **Virtual Power Plant Partnerships (VP3)** - Virtual Power Plants
- **RMI** - Virtual Power Plant Flipbook
- Microgrid Knowledge
- **WATT Coalition** - (1) What are GETs?, and (2) Federal Funding for GETs

Overview

The influx of the clean energy transition has the potential to bring great economic benefits to all states. However, it is imperative that states take action to ensure new clean energy jobs are well-paid and protect communities at risk of losing jobs from the retirement of fossil fuel facilities. West Virginia, a state severely impacted by the closing of coal mines, has made progress to ensure its coal communities are financially secure during the transition.

Legislation

Indicates bipartisan sponsorship

- **Montana S.B.191 (enacted 2019):** Allowed counties to establish a coal trust fund for future revenue losses, to address "the need for communities to be able to prepare for reductions in coal mining and coal-fired electric generation."
- **New Hampshire S.B.152 (enacted 2023):** Establishes a marine trades career workforce development fund; establishes an offshore wind industry workforce training center committee.
- ****South Carolina H.B.3194 (enacted 2021):** Required the Public Service Authority to implement a plan to provide employees affected by coal station closures with access to job training programs and provide economic development opportunities in the communities where the retired coal stations are located. (Section 23)
- **Virginia S.B. 25 (enacted 2024):** Provided a $500/kWh incentive for solar projects on former coal mines and a $100/kWh incentive for solar projects on brownfields.
- ****West Virginia H.B.4479 (enacted 2022):** Established the Coalfield Communities Grant Facilitation Commission to administer state funds to local entities the required matching portion for certain grants; facilitated assistance to these local entities by providing access to grant writing expertise and support.

What is a Just Transition?

Just Transition is the concept that as the economy moves from being fossil fuel-based to being clean energy-based, former fossil fuel workers and communities are not left without any support. Economic transitions can be disorganized and disruptive or they can be intentional and pro-worker; proponents of a just transition advocate for policies that will provide economic replacement for fossil fuel communities and ensure that clean energy jobs are good jobs. - Institute for Human Rights and Business

Additional Resources

- **National Caucus of Environmental Legislators** - Just Transition Issue Page
- **Reclaiming Appalachia Coalition** - NATIONAL TO NEIGHBORHOODS: Catalyzing Opportunities for Coal-Impacted Communities
- **Blue Green Alliance** - State-Based Policy Toolkit: Policies to Build a Cleaner, Safer, More Equitable Economy
- **Just and Equitable Transition Coalition** - Tools to Help Plan For and Fund a Just Equitable Transition From Fossil Fuel Power Plants and Mining

Overview

Nature-based solutions can play a large role in the mitigation and adaptation to climate change. Virginia has taken the lead on nature-based solutions, and there are great opportunities for other states to make progress.

What are Nature-Based Solutions?

"Nature-based solutions refer to a suite of actions or policies that harness the power of nature to address some of our most pressing societal challenges, such as threats to water security, rising risk of disasters, or climate change." Examples include: restoration of habitats, water resource management, disaster risk reduction, and green infrastructure. - World Wildlife Fund

What is Carbon Sequestration?

"Biologic carbon sequestration involves storing CO2 in places where it is stored naturally as part of the carbon cycle. Some carbon is stored in plants—especially woody plants and grasslands—as a result of the biological process of photosynthesis. This process removes CO2 from the atmosphere and transforms it into living plant tissues." - United States Department of Energy

Legislation

Indicates bipartisan sponsorship

- ****Georgia H.B.355 (enacted 2021):** Created a Georgia Carbon Sequestration Registry focused on forest protection and embodied carbon in building materials.
- ****Texas H.B. 4018 (enacted 2023):** Allowed the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) to deploy nature-based solutions to generate funds for conservation efforts on state lands including fringing wetland marsh, oyster reefs and seagrass meadows.
- **Virginia S.B.1374 (enacted 2021):** Established an intergovernmental taskforce to study and submit a report on how to use state land and marine resources for carbon sequestration.
- ****West Virginia S.B.162 (enacted 2023):** Allowed the Division of Natural Resources to lease "state-owned pore spaces underlying state forests, natural and scenic areas and wildlife managements" for carbon sequestration.

Additional Resources

- **Federal Emergency Management Agency** - Building Community Resilience with Nature-Based Solutions
- **The Nature Conservancy** - Coastal Resilience: Using nature-based solutions to protect Florida's coasts
- **National Caucus of Environmental Legislators** - Nature-Based Climate Solutions Webpage
- **World Wildlife Fund** - Powering Nature: Creating the Conditions to Enable Nature-Based Solutions

Overview

Clean energy is driving economic growth across the country, creating good jobs and investments in communities, particularly in rural communities and politically diverse states. Clean energy such as wind, solar, and energy storage are often built in rural areas, bringing communities new revenue and creating local well paying jobs. Not only does clean energy bring jobs, private investment, and revenue to communities, but it can help strengthen energy independence, drive down utility costs, and make the grid more reliable. Bipartisan support of clean energy is widespread and can help in creating a cleaner, more resilient energy future.

Legislation

Indicates bipartisan sponsorship

- **Arizona H.B.2373 **(enacted 2023):** Allowed a municipality or county to use a qualified online automated permitting platform to verify code compliance in order to satisfy the solar construction permit.
- Florida H.B.683 **(enacted 2025):** Authorizes private providers to use permitting software like Solar APP+ to expedite the permitting process for residential solar and battery systems.
- North Carolina H.B.589 **(enacted 2017):** Established Competitive Procurement of Renewable Energy Program; required Duke Energy to reach 6,160 MW of utility-scale solar and offer at least 20 MW of community solar per year for five years; required program for large businesses, universities, and military to procure renewable energy.
- **Pennsylvania H.B.1032 **(enacted 2024):** Provided grants to cover 50% of the installation of solar on public K-12 schools, community colleges, and career technical schools.
- **South Carolina H.J.R.4831 **(enacted 2022):** Directed the Department of Commerce to conduct an economic development study to evaluate the state's business advantages, economic climate, and workforce readiness to create a roadmap to effectively compete in attracting offshore wind energy supply chain industries to the state.
- Virginia S.B. 253 **(enacted 2024):** Created a shared solar program for Appalachian Power customers and expand Dominion Energy's existing program (**S.B. 255).

Additional Resources

- **National Caucus of Environmental Legislators** - (1) Community Solar Issue Page, (2) Emerging Energy Technologies Issue Page, (3) Offshore Wind Issue Page, (4) Renewable Energy & Energy Efficiency Issue Page, and (4) Webinar: More Rooftop Solar, Less Red Tape
- **Solar United Neighbors** - Learn the Issues: Solar and Solar Incentives & Financing in Florida
- **Local Solar for All** - Local Solar Roadmap
- **Niskanen Center** - How Republican-led states are powering the renewable energy boom

NCEL
National Caucus of Environmental Legislators
202.744.1006 • www.ncelenviro.org • 1140 3rd St NE, Office 2137 • Washington, DC 20002

Overview

In recent years, transportation has been an area for some progress in politically diverse states. The onset of funds from the Federal Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act has only spurred more action in transportation, specifically with the requirement of creating electric vehicle deployment plans to receive certain funds. Transportation policy can also promote public and active transportation methods that reduce Vehicles Miles Traveled (VMT).

Additional Resources

- **National Caucus of Environmental Legislators** - Transportation Briefing Book
- **U.S. Department of Transportation** - Charging Forward: A Toolkit for Planning and Funding Rural Electric Mobility Infrastructure
- **Electrification Coalition -** Electric Vehicles in Rural Communities
- **Regulatory Assistance Project** - Roadmap for Electric Transportation

Legislation

Indicates bipartisan sponsorship

- ****Georgia S.B.146 (enacted 2023):** Allowed convenience stores and other businesses to charge consumers for electricity by the kilowatt hour instead of the amount of time it takes for electric vehicle drivers to charge their batteries.
- ****Florida C.S./S.B.7018 (enacted 2020):** Required the department to develop a master plan for electric vehicle charging station infrastructure along the State Highway System.
- ****Tennessee S.B.2602 (enacted 2022):** Directed the state to study the cost, feasibility, and infrastructure of expanding railroad passenger service in this state.
- ****Tennessee S.B. 1807 (enacted 2024):** Required the Department of Transportation to submit a report on its progress on passenger and freight rail and public transportation; requires DOT to create an Office of Rail and Public Transportation.
- **Utah S.B.26 (enacted 2025):** Amends the Housing and Transit Reinvestment Zone Act to bolster the development and revitalization of housing and transit areas, while creating funds to support affordable housing and mitigate hotel revenue losses.
- **Virginia S.B. 575 (enacted 2022):** Required all agencies of the Commonwealth to utilize the total cost of ownership calculator prior to purchasing or leasing light-duty vehicles and to purchase electric vehicles unless the calculator clearly indicates that purchasing or leasing an internal combustion-engine vehicle has a lower cost of ownership.
- ****West Virginia H.B.4492 (enacted 2022):** Created the Division of Multimodal Transportation to promote safe, efficient transportation, preserve rail, water and airway facilities.

South Carolina Energy Freedom Act (2019)

SC
SOUTH CAROLINA ENERGY FREEDOM ACT (2019)

Overview

The Energy Freedom Act (**SC A. 62, R. 82, H. 3659) passed in 2019 changed the face of utility regulation and renewable energy development in South Carolina. This piece of legislation made South Carolina a leader in utility regulation for the benefit of the consumer. The Energy Freedom Act received bipartisan sponsorship.

Outcomes

→ The effects of this law have been significant, with the newly armed Public Service Commission rejecting the Integrated Resource Plan of Dominion Energy South Carolina (DESC) in 2020 and rejecting the Solar Choice Metering proposal from Dominion Energy in 2021.

Referenced Resources

- **South Carolina Office of Regulatory Staff** - South Carolina Energy Freedom Act
- **Energy News Network** - Commentary: With Energy Freedom Act, South Carolina takes steps toward resilience

Notable Aspects of the Bill

- Enshrines consumer protections and rights including:
  - » Protection from rising costs
  - » Opportunities to reduce or manage their own energy usage
  - » Right to electric rates that enable energy efficiency, demand response, or onsite distributed energy resources (DERs) to reduce their electricity usage
  - » Right to obtain and use data collected by a utility on their individual energy consumption. (Sections 58-27-845 and 58-27-2660)
- Allows customers with solar panels (or other forms of renewable energy) to cover some or all of their monthly electric bills with energy they generate through net metering. (Sections 58-40-10, 58-40-20, and 58-27-2610)
- Encourages electric service providers to offer neighborhood community solar programs. (Section 58-41-40)
- Directs the Public Service Commission to promote access to solar energy projects for low- and moderate-income customers. (Section 58-41-40)
- Authorizes the Public Service Commission to open a generic docket to create programs for the competitive procurement of energy and capacity from renewable energy facilities by an electrical utility. (Sections 58-41-20, 58-41-20, and 58-33-110)
- Requires utilities to file a voluntary renewable program for commercial and industrial retail customers with a demand of 1 MW or more and allows participating customers to negotiate and contract directly with renewable energy suppliers. (Section 58-41-30)
- Requires the Public Service Commission to consider revisions to include energy storage and ensure efficient and timely processing of interconnection requests. (Section 58-27-460)
- Requires utilities to submit Integrated Resource Plans at least every 3 years and provide annual updates. Gives the Public Service Commission authority to approve, deny, or modify a utility's Integrated Resource Plan. (Section 58-37-40)

NCEL
National Caucus of Environmental Legislators
202.744.1006 • www.ncelenviro.org • 1140 3rd St NE, Office 2137 • Washington, DC 20002

Notes

Notes

Notes

Bipartisan Climate Solutions Briefing Book

202.744.1006 • www.ncelenviro.org • 1140 3rd St NE, Office 2137 • Washington, DC 20002