

# Quarterly Impact Report: September 2026

## Overview

Summer 2026 was a season of immense momentum for NCEL. The [National Forum in Chicago](#) was our biggest yet, bringing together state lawmakers for learning, connection, and collaboration. Looking ahead, NCEL is entering a busy fall event calendar, with programming focused on energy affordability, water management, climate, offshore energy, and more. We are also continuing to expand our programming with an increasing focus on experiential learning that give legislators firsthand insights to inform solutions to environmental challenges back home.

## Events

**2026 National Forum:** In late July, NCEL brought together more than 200 legislators from 44 states and territories in Chicago for its largest National Forum to date, celebrating 30 years of state-led environmental leadership. Across three days, lawmakers explored pressing challenges and actionable solutions spanning energy affordability, disaster resilience, housing, transportation, biodiversity, and more. Through plenary and breakout sessions, hands-on learning tracks, and opportunities to connect across state lines, attendees shared practical approaches and built relationships to carry this work forward in their states. Learn more about the 2026 National Forum in our [Recap Blog](#).

**European Circular Policy Expedition:** In early July, NCEL partnered with Circle to bring 11 legislators and legislative staff from eight states to Austria and Slovakia for the European Circular Policy Expedition. Participants gained firsthand insight into how established Deposit Return Systems (DRS) and Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) programs operate, exploring lessons relevant to growing state efforts to reduce plastic waste and strengthen packaging and recycling policies. Read more in our [Recap Blog](#).



*The photos above were taken during NCEL events in the third quarter of 2026.*



**Energy Affordability Policy and Messaging Webinar:** In September, NCEL hosted a webinar on lowering energy bills, bringing together 134 legislators and policy professionals for an actionable briefing on state strategies to address rising utility costs. The webinar highlighted NCEL's new [Energy Affordability Briefing Book](#) and [Messaging Toolkit](#), sharing policy options, communications strategies, and legislative perspectives to help states deliver near-term relief while building a more affordable, resilient clean energy future.

**Southeast Energy Affordability Summit:** In September, NCEL convened legislators from across Georgia, South Carolina, and North Carolina for the Southeast Energy Affordability Summit in Atlanta, bringing together policymakers and experts to explore practical strategies for lowering energy costs and strengthening grid reliability. Through policy discussions, hands-on site visits to a data center and sustainable building training center, and interactive sessions on utility regulation, distributed energy, and consumer protections, participants gained firsthand insights and actionable tools to advance energy affordability in their states.

**Western Water Convening:** In September, NCEL convened legislators and policy experts in Fort Collins, Colorado for a Western Water Summit focused on water security, governance, and resilience across the Colorado River Basin. Participants explored the impacts of climate change and water scarcity, state and Tribal water relationships, and strategies for managing agricultural, industrial, and municipal demand. A field tour of the Chimney Hollow Reservoir provided firsthand insight into collaborative approaches to meeting growing water needs, while interactive sessions highlighted practical policy solutions and nature-based strategies for strengthening watershed health.

**Denmark Offshore Wind Tour:** In September, NCEL led a delegation of 10 state legislators from seven states to Denmark for a five-day learning experience on the full life cycle of offshore wind. Through firsthand site visits and discussions with Danish policymakers, industry leaders, and experts, participants explored innovative offshore wind technology, supply chains, workforce development, transmission, and marine biodiversity, gaining practical insights to inform state-level policy and support the growth of the U.S. offshore wind sector.

**NYC Climate Week:** During Climate Week NYC, NCEL helped convene policymakers and partners around practical state-level solutions to climate and energy challenges. Events focused on proven approaches to lowering energy costs through clean energy, advancing climate-smart forestry policies, and accelerating electric innovation, while creating opportunities for legislators and other leaders to share successes, identify policy opportunities, and build momentum for the year ahead.

## Network Engagement & Policy Development

**FERC & PJM Interconnection Reform:** In late July, NCEL filed a formal comment letter with the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) on behalf of 98 state legislators from 10 states. The letter requests reforms be made to ensure their states can participate meaningfully in decision-making at the PJM Interconnection, the nation's largest regional grid operator. Following the letter, FERC requested that NCEL submit a proposal on specific reforms. [Read the letter.](#)



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**Bill Tracking:** NCEL is actively [tracking](#) over 2,600 bills in 45 states and territories.

## Resources

**Energy Affordability Messaging Toolkit:** NCEL's [Energy Affordability Messaging Toolkit](#) provides legislators with effective strategies for communicating about clean energy and affordability policies. Designed to complement the Energy Affordability Briefing Book, the Toolkit offers key messages, policy-specific guidance, and responses to common constituent questions across three areas: delivering near-term relief, protecting customers and reforming the system, and building a low-cost clean energy future.

**New Fact Sheets & Other Resources:** NCEL continued to produce relevant resources for state legislators on timely environmental topics, including [strengthening protections for wetlands](#) and [improving permitting for ecological restoration](#).

**Recent Blogs:** NCEL published blogs on emerging state policy solutions such as [Hawaii's new Conservation Sanctuary law](#) that was inspired by a trip to New Zealand, as well as the use of the [outdoors as a public health and economic solution](#).

## NCEL in the News

- **Shore Local News:** "[New Jersey's 'Skip the Stuff' law takes effect Aug. 1, changing restaurant takeout orders](#)"
- **Stateline:** "[The feds no longer protect endangered species habitat. States say they can't pick up the slack](#)"
- **Latitude Media:** "[PJM states don't think it's too big to fix](#)"
- **The San Juan Daily Star:** "[PDP Sen. Álvarez chosen as panelist for National Caucus of Environmental Legislators](#)"
- **Hell Gate:** "[My Hometown's on Track to Eradicate Rats. Could NYC Do the Same?](#)"
- **Hawaii News Now:** "[Hawaii lawmakers in national policy spotlight at Chicago conference](#)"
- **KREM:** "[If you were affected by wildfires, here's what you need to get for your insurance](#)"
- **ECIKS.org:** "[Insurance faces \\$1.4T wildfire risk across 2.5M western homes](#)"
- **Canary Media:** "[PJM has finally greenlit a lot of new clean power. Can it get built?](#)"
- **RTO Insider:** "[FERC Technical Conference Comments Delve into PJM Governance](#)"
- **Bloomberg Law:** "[States Aspire to Make Polluters Pay Despite NY Superfund Ruling](#)"



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