

STATE ACTIONS ADDRESS CLIMATE CHANGE

By Winifred Colwill (LWVMO)

States throughout the nation have adopted a wide range of initiatives that directly or indirectly help to mitigate global warming.ⁱ Initially, the stimulus to act was often air quality regulations, electricity costs, or economic issues as much as climate change.

In recent years, however, as scientific consensus strengthened regarding the reality of global warming and likely adverse effects, more states are directly tackling greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by setting emission caps, offsets and reduction targets, or joining regional associations to address common concerns.ⁱⁱ

More than half of the states have completed comprehensive **Climate Action Plans**; see the table at the end of this paper. The plans typically include GHG inventories, descriptions of potential impact of climate change on the state's natural resources and economy, and policy options for reducing GHG. The plans can provide policymakers with a sound basis for action.

Regional Initiatives

Many states are participating in regional initiatives to address climate change. By working cooperatively they avoid duplication of work and produce uniform initiatives that cover a wide geographic area.

- *New England Governors (6) and Eastern Canadian Premiers (NEG-ECP)*, in August 2001, produced the first comprehensive Climate Action Plan with specified reduction goals: 1990 emission levels by 2010; 10 percent below 1990 emission levels by 2020.ⁱⁱⁱ

- *The Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI)*, comprised of 11 Northeastern and Mid-Atlantic states, finalized a plan in 2007 to achieve carbon dioxide (CO₂) reductions from fossil-fired generators through a regional cap and trade program. Their goal is to reduce emissions to approximately 10 percent below 1990 levels by 2018.^{iv}

- Eighteen states are part of the *Western Governor's Association Clean and Diversified Energy Initiative*. They seek to develop clean energy, improve energy efficiency and build adequate transmission to meet the region's needs through 2030.

- *The Western Climate Initiative (WRI)*, established in February 2007, is comprised of six western states, plus British Columbia and Manitoba. The group plans to develop a multi-state registry to aid in meeting their regional GHG reduction target of 15 percent below 2005 levels by 2020.

- In 2004, four upper Midwestern states joined with Manitoba to form the *Powering the Plains Initiative (PTP)* to address climate change issues as they affect agriculture and energy while promoting regional economic development.

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- The *Midwestern Greenhouse Gas Reduction Accord (MRGGRA)* was signed by nine states and one Canadian Province on November 1, 2007. The group intends to develop regional GHG reduction targets with time frames, a tracking system, and a multi-sector cap-and-trade system.^v

- The *Energy Security and Climate Stewardship Platform for the Midwest* was signed by eight members of the Midwestern Governors Association in November 2007. Goals include energy efficiency improvements, renewable energy production, biofuels development, and, by 2020, carbon capture and storage for all new coal plants in the region.^{vi}

- *The Climate Registry*, a voluntary GHG reporting system, was launched in May 2007 to compile GHG inventories in a single database that can be measured, tracked, verified and publicly reported. The Registry is comprised of 39 U. S. states, the District of Columbia, six Canadian provinces, three Native American tribes and two Mexican states. The Registry will begin accepting GHG inventories in June 2008. Reporting entities recognize that a comprehensive database will facilitate a national emissions trading system.^{vii} A provision in the FY2008 Omnibus Appropriations Bill, passed by Congress in December 2007, requires the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to develop a final rule by June 2009 for mandatory, economy-wide reporting of GHG emissions.^{viii}

Individual State Initiatives

Climate Change Commissions or advisory boards have been established by legislatures or governors in 21 states. Typically representing diverse interests, these groups analyze alternative policy options and recommend specific strategies and legislation to mitigate climate change.

In 2003, ME became the first state in the nation to enact legislation that established **GHG reduction targets**. Since then, 16 other states have set statewide targets that commit the state to reduce GHG to specific levels within a certain time period. For example, WA plans to lower state emissions to 1990 levels by 2020; 25 percent below 1990 levels by 2035 and 50 percent below 1990 levels by 2050. Several states have set even more ambitious goals. The targets are sometimes established by executive order or state climate change commission.

A few states have adopted specific strategies to reduce GHG emissions from fossil-fueled power plants, the source of approximately 40 percent of the nation's CO₂ emissions.^{ix} For example, CA, MA and NH have set **emission caps**; OR and WA require new power plants to **offset** expected CO₂ emissions by 17 percent and 20 percent, respectively. MA and NH require offsets from existing plants as well.

CA, MA, MT, NH, OR and WA have established **GHG Performance Standards** that require new power plants to have emissions equal to or more stringent than the established standard (e.g., the most efficient natural gas combined cycle plant).

Eight states offer incentives to encourage advanced coal technology, e.g., **Integrated Gasification Combined Cycle (IGCC)** with and without carbon capture and sequestration (CCS).

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Twenty-six states and the District of Columbia have adopted mandatory **Renewable Portfolio Standards** (RPS) that require electric utilities to provide a minimum, increasing percentage of their generation from renewable sources within certain time frames; MO and VA set voluntary targets. Mandatory RPS programs encourage investment in technologies with lower (or no) GHG emissions by assuring producers and investors of a stable and growing market for the electricity produced. Several states have raised their original targets.^{xxi}

Energy efficiency improvements are generally the most cost-effective way to lower GHG emissions. Twelve states are achieving reductions by enacting **Appliance Efficiency Standards**^{xii} for commercial and household products not covered by federal rule. Thirty-eight states have adopted **Residential Building Energy Codes**; however, not all meet current code requirements, and level of enforcement varies.

Twenty states require or recommend that state buildings and/or state-funded buildings meet **Green Building Standards**, for example, the U.S. Green Building Council's Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design Standards (LEED).^{xiii} Green building design aims to maximize resource efficiency and minimize impact on occupant health and the environment.^{xiv}

In 2002, CA enacted the nation's first **GHG Auto Standards** for cars and light trucks. The standards required a 30 percent reduction in average per-mile emissions from model year 2002 by 2016. CA requested a Clean Air Act waiver of federal pre-emption from the EPA to allow the standards to go into effect. In anticipation of EPA approval, 16 other states adopted or announced they would adopt the CA standards. In late December 2007, the EPA denied CA the waiver on the basis that a single federal standard was preferable. That same day, the President signed an energy bill that raises vehicle fuel economy standards to 35 miles per gallon by 2020. In January 2008, CA filed a lawsuit challenging the EPA's decision.^{xv}

Conclusion

As increasing numbers of states take strong action to address climate change, pressure on Congress is building to enact comprehensive legislation that will guarantee reduction of GHG emissions nationwide. The table below shows the states that have adopted the initiatives described above.

Winifred Colwill, LWVMO, is a member of the LWVUS Climate Change Task Force.

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Endnotes:

- ⁱ Much of the information for this paper was drawn from the following two Web sites. Additional initiatives and detailed information about all state climate protection programs may be found there as well:
- http://www.pewclimate.org/what_s_being_done/in_the_states/
http://www.epa.gov/climatechange/wycd/stateandlocalgov/state_actionslist.html
- ⁱⁱ http://www.pewclimate.org/what_s_being_done/in_the_states/news.cfm
- ⁱⁱⁱ http://www.negc.org/documents/NEG-ECP_percent20CCAP.pdf
- ^{iv} <http://www.rggi.org/agreement.htm>
- ^v <http://www.midwesterngovernors.org/govenergynov.htm>
- ^{vi} <http://www.midwesterngovernors.org/resolutions/Platform.pdf>
- ^{vii} <http://www.theclimateregistry.org/>
- ^{viii} <http://www.rules.house.gov/110/text/omni/jes/jesdivf.pdf>;
<http://www.rules.house.gov/110/text/omni/divf.pdf>
- ^{ix} <http://www.nrdc.org/air/pollution/benchmarking/exec.asp>
- ^x http://www.ucsusa.org/clean_energy/clean_energy_policies/clean-energy-update-01-21-07.html
- ^{xi} http://www.pewclimate.org/what_s_being_done/in_the_states/rps.cfm
- ^{xii} http://www.pewclimate.org/what_s_being_done/in_the_states/energy_eff_map.cfm
- ^{xiii} http://www.pewclimate.org/what_s_being_done/in_the_states/leed_state_buildings.cfm
- ^{xiv} <http://www.ciwmb.ca.gov/GreenBuilding/Basics.htm>
- ^{xv} <http://openocrs.com/document/RS22788>: *Regulation of Vehicle Greenhouse Gas Emissions: State Standards*; 1-11-08

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STATE ACTIONS TO ADDRESS CLIMATE CHANGE

	Regional	Climate	Climate	GHG	GHG	Carbon	RPS	Appliance	Resid. Bldg.	Green	GHG Auto
	Initiatives	Action Plan	Commission	Targets	Registry	Cap/Offset		Standards	Energy Code	State Bldgs.	Standards
AK	X		X						x		
AL		X			X						
AR			X						X	X	
AZ	X		X	X	X		X	X		X	X
CA	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
CO	X	X			X		X			X	X
CT	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X
DC					X		X	X	X		
DE		X			X		X		X		
FL			X	X	X		X		X	X	X
GA					X				X		
HI	X	X		X	X		X		X	X	
IA	X	X	X		X		X		X		
ID	X				X				X		
IL	X	X	X	X	X		X				
IN									X		
KS	X				X						
KY		X							X		
LA											
MA	X	X		X	X	X	X		X	X	X
MD		X	X		X		X	X		X	X
ME	X	X		X	X		X			X	X
MN	X	X	X	X	X		X		X		
MI	X				X					X	
MO		X			X		volun				
MS	X										
MT	X	X	X		X		X	X			
NC		X	X		X				X		
ND	X								X		
NE	X								X		
NH	X	X		X	X	X	X		X		
NM	X	X	X	X	X		X		X	X	X
NJ	X	X		X	X		X	X	X	X	X
NV			X		X		X		X	X	
NY	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X
OH	X				X				X		
OK					X				X		
OR	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X
PA		X			X		X	X	X	X	X
RI	X	X		X	X		X	X	X	X	X
SC			X						X		
SD	X										
TN					X				X		
TX					X		X		X		
UT	X		X		X				X		X
VA					X		volun		X	X	
VT	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X		X
WA	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

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WI	X	X	X		X		X		X	X	
WV									X		
WY	X				X						