



## Environment: Talking Points

Controlling greenhouse gas emissions is Virginia's single largest challenge in slowing global warming.

In Virginia, the two largest contributors of emissions are:

- **transportation** (cars, trucks, buses, planes) and
- the **electricity industry** (using fossil fuels).

In two years, Virginia Democrats set in motion plans to significantly reduce greenhouse gas emissions by the year 2050 by passing three bills:

- **Clean Car Standards** – sets transportation emission standards and mandates that a certain percentage of vehicles sold must be electric.
- **Virginia Clean Economy Act** – a framework for Virginia's two largest utilities to reach zero carbon emissions by 2050 by generating electricity from renewable energy sources, not fossil fuels, and improving energy efficiency in lower income areas.
- **Clean Energy & Community Flood Preparedness Act** – commits Virginia to the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative, a carbon trading market. This will net an estimated \$100M per year to be spent on flood readiness, coastal resiliency, and energy efficiency.

## Jobs Created by Clean Energy

While debates continue over whether one kind of energy will create more jobs than another, the people of Virginia have been busy proving that cleaning up the environment puts people to work.

In 2019, the latest data available, there were over 100,000 Virginians employed in clean energy and energy efficiency while only 54,000 people were employed in traditional energy jobs (construction, generation, distribution) including just over 3,000 in coal. The Virginia Clean Economy Act alone is expected to create over 29,000 new jobs leading to more than \$4 billion in economic growth.

## Continued Progress Depends on Democratic Control

Virginians strongly support efforts to clean the environment and slow climate change as people increasingly connect extreme weather events with global warming.

Despite public opinion, for 20 years the GOP-led legislature rejected every significant piece of environmental legislation. The progress made in the last two Democratic-controlled years was partisan with many bills receiving not a single Republican vote.

Many GOP candidates, including governor nominee Glenn Youngkin, are explicitly campaigning against a renewable energy economy and hope to reverse the enacted legislation. Any reversal would upend Dominion Energy's and Appalachian Power's progress in developing new energy sources, and new entrants to the energy market would be hurt.

*The transition to clean energy and all efforts to slow climate change depend on electing Democratic legislators who will continue the progress that has been made in these last two years.*

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*The Sierra Club rates legislators on their environmental and environmental justice voting records. For 2020 and 2021, every Virginia Republican General Assembly member earned a failing grade of F.*

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See Local Majority's complete report: [Virginia Takes Bold Steps on the Environment](#)

## Other Important Environment-Related Bills Enacted

### Transportation Related

- An electric vehicle (EV) rebate program of \$2500 or \$4500 for lower income households was established but not yet funded.
- An EV charging infrastructure study is planned.
- A school bus electrification program was established, but not yet funded.
- A public transport study was approved.
- A VA Passenger Rail Authority will oversee the \$3.7B Transforming Rail in VA initiative that will carry 9m passengers annually, reducing traffic and emissions.
- State Corporate Commission must find ways to accelerate electrification.

### Energy and Fossil Fuel Related

- Coal tax credits are discontinued.
- The scope of gas pipeline inspections is increased.
- Erosion/sediment studies are required prior to gas pipeline construction.

### Clean Air Related

- A Task Force was established to find opportunities for carbon sequestration.
- A greenhouse gas inventory is required every four years.

### Energy Efficiency Related

- An amendment of State Building Codes to follow International Energy Conservation Codes must be considered.

*Note: This is not a complete list*