America’s New Governors

In November 2018, the American people elected 20 new governors in states across the country, from Florida to Alaska. Those states are home to 150 million people and have a combined GDP of nearly $9 trillion.

Those states also emitted 2.1 billion metric tons of global warming pollution in 2015, accounting for 45 percent of United States emissions and more emissions than any country besides China and India.

An Opportunity for Rapid Action

Over the last decade, governors across the country have taken executive action and put in place policies to accelerate progress in clean energy, electric vehicles, and efficient buildings. These actions have laid the groundwork for America’s new governors to set policies that can reduce emissions right away, and for decades to come.

Depending on state law and circumstance, actions available to governors include: setting emission reduction and clean energy goals, directing state agencies to lead by example, setting clean energy policy, limiting fossil fuel production, and forming regional climate agreements. (See reverse for details.)
12 Ways America’s New Governors Can Take Climate Action Right Now

Governors taking office in 2019 should prioritize taking bold action on the greatest challenge of our time: climate change.

Governors should set ambitious goals for reducing carbon pollution and accelerate the transition to clean energy.

Action #1: Set a strong statewide emission reduction goal.

Action #2: Set strong clean energy and energy savings goals.

Action #3: Set goals for electric vehicles.

Action #4: Set a waste reduction goal.

Governors can ensure that state governments “lead by example” by requiring state agencies to make climate-friendly purchasing decisions.

Action #5: Direct state agencies to deploy clean energy.

Action #6: Direct state agencies to adopt and encourage electric vehicles.

Action #7: Direct state agencies to reduce waste from state operations.

Governors often have the power to make policy decisions with lasting benefits for the climate.

Action #8: Set strong building energy codes.

Action #9: Shift transportation spending and policies to support low-carbon modes.

Action #10: Incentivize electric vehicles and adopt Cleaner Cars standards.

Action #11: Limit new fossil fuel infrastructure.

Governors can rally neighboring states to join regional agreements to address climate change.

Action #12. Collaborate in regional climate initiatives.

Recommendations for Effective Action

Governors have an extensive range of options to reduce emissions and help prevent the worst impacts of global warming. To ensure that their actions are as effective as possible, governors should:

Support accompanying legislative efforts. While non-binding goals are important, legislation is necessary to create durable policies to reduce climate emissions.

Set concrete, science-based goals. Timelines for emission reductions should reflect what science deems necessary to prevent the worst impacts of global warming, and should align with broader state efforts to reduce climate emissions.

Give agencies timelines for action and ensure follow-through. Many executive orders direct agencies to lead by example, form new commissions or study groups, or begin the process of adopting new policies. Such orders should include timelines for action, and governors must ensure their orders are carried out fully.

Ensure that resources follow policy. Governors should use their authority to allocate financial and staffing resources toward accomplishment of the policies they establish.

Publicize action and rally the public. New actions are an opportunity to share information about climate solutions and motivate the public to join and support future efforts.

For more information and the full report, please visit www.environmentamericacenter.org

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