Coalition of 25 Governors, Leading Most Ambitious State Climate Agenda in U.S. History, Vows To Continue Climate Action

The Bipartisan U.S. Climate Alliance delivers blueprint for scaling up climate action regardless of election outcome

Today, alongside 11 governors at a Climate Week event, the U.S. Climate Alliance (USCA) released its annual report, Leading the Charge: Working Together to Build an Equitable, Clean and Prosperous Future. The report details the climate action and policy framework Alliance Governors have built over the course of the past three years and sets forth recommendations to Congress and the federal government for national climate action. The recommendations are based on the Alliance’s multi-year track record of success driving economic growth while enacting climate policy and cutting emissions, even while contending with aggressive federal rollbacks on bedrock environmental regulations.

Governor Cuomo, Co-Chair of the U.S. Climate Alliance, said “In a year where we have exhausted the English alphabet in naming tropical storms before the end of September and are enduring record-breaking fires and toxic smoke in the Western half of the country, all while dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic, it is clear that states and governors have an obligation to do everything we can to beat back the devastating impacts of climate change in the absence of federal leadership. I am proud of the work of the U.S. Climate Alliance over the past three years and New York will continue to partner with our fellow states to build resilient communities, grow the clean energy economy with billions of dollars of investments in renewable energy, and ensure a healthy environment for future generations.”

Now a bipartisan coalition 25 governors strong, USCA represents 55 percent of the U.S. population and 60 percent of the American economy - an economy larger than all countries but the United States and China. Prior to the current economic crisis, Alliance states spent years proving that climate action and economic growth can go hand-in-hand. Between 2005-2018, Alliance states collectively outpaced the rest of the country in both emissions reductions and economic output, achieving an estimated 14 percent decrease in emissions and a 16 percent increase in per-capita economic output. These trends held in 2019 and are further reinforced by a soon to be released analysis showing that the clean energy policies enacted by Alliance states between 2016-2019 created over 133,000 jobs. While the coronavirus pandemic and resulting economic downturn have disrupted these trends, state climate progress has not been derailed.

“We have all seen the devastating impact climate change has had on public health, the environment, the economy, and families across the country. That is why today, I am proud to join my fellow governors from across the country to talk about our collective actions to combat climate change,” said Governor Whitmer. “Today, I announced the MI Healthy Climate plan that commits Michigan to a statewide goal of becoming carbon-neutral by 2050. This plan puts
Michigan on a path toward a more sustainable and clean future, while developing new clean energy jobs for hardworking Michigan families. This is an important step as we continue to work toward a better future for the generations after us.”

Alliance states are at the ready to pursue bolder, broader climate action with or without federal climate leadership. They are committed to rebuilding the economy in ways that prioritize climate change, racial equity, public health, and resilience.

“As we are seeing the devastating impacts of climate change including drought and record-breaking wildfires, Colorado continues taking bold steps to lower our emissions, clean our air, and preserve what we all know and love about our great state” said Governor Polis. “In the absence of federal leadership, states and governors are stepping up and taking action to safeguard the well-being of our residents, protect our public lands and environment for generations to come, and harness the enormous economic opportunity that comes with leading the transition to a clean energy economy. I’m proud of what we’ve accomplished since taking office in 2019, but know there is still plenty of work to be done to reach our goals.”

Together, Alliance states have cemented a foundation for coordinated climate change policy adoption and implementation, providing a roadmap for national policy makers and the next federal administration. The Alliance’s recommendations point to the need for policy goals to align with science; include equity, environmental justice, and family-sustaining jobs at their core; and build on states’ experiences and knowledge implementing innovative climate policies.

"I'm proud to join my fellow Climate Alliance governors to reaffirm our commitment to bipartisan leadership on climate change," said Governor Hogan. "As our nation faces the environmental challenges of the 21st century—from severe weather to the need for energy independence—we need more leaders on both sides of the aisle who are willing to think outside the box and work together to meet these issues head-on."

Over the past three years, the Alliance has advanced a nation-leading multi-state policy agenda, securing the following commitments, with several adopted during 2020:

- Eight Alliance states have adopted economy-wide carbon neutrality goals. Oregon, Washington, and Massachusetts have strengthened or set their goals in 2020. Just this week, Michigan became the ninth by announcing their carbon neutrality goal.
- Sixteen Alliance states have set 100 percent zero carbon or net-zero electricity goals. Virginia and Rhode Island adopted goals during 2020.
- Eleven Alliance states are engaged in carbon markets. New Jersey rejoined the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI) in January 2020 and Virginia’s market participation will begin in January 2021. Pennsylvania has also signaled its intent to join RGGI.
- Eleven Alliance states have adopted building and appliance efficiency standards on top of existing federal standards. New Jersey, New Mexico, and Delaware strengthened their standards this year.
- Sixteen Alliance states have adopted, or are in the process of adopting, California’s low-emissions vehicle standards. Fourteen states have adopted, or in the process of adopting California’s zero-emission vehicle standards.
- Sixteen Alliance states are working to pass legislation or adopt regulations to phase down HFCs.
• Twenty Alliance states have developed or are drafting climate adaptation plans.
• Seven Alliance states have established healthy soils policies to promote carbon sequestration on natural and working lands.

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