

Searching for a New Deal on Climate? Look to the States

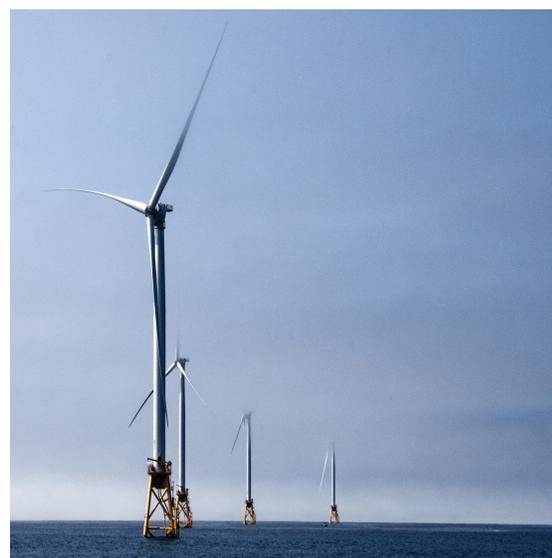
Can the United States decarbonize aggressively enough to meet the bar set by scientists, yet pragmatically enough to work politically and as a matter of law and policy? In a Clean Energy Finance Forum series, Robert J. Klee argues that leading states have already built the policy architecture for deep national decarbonization. We should look no further than the blue and red states that are currently leading on climate to see the strategies in action that would achieve the swift and far-reaching emissions reductions we require.

CLIMATE TARGETS AND TOOLS TO ACHIEVE THEM

Set Economy-Wide Greenhouse Gas Targets: Twenty-two states and the District of Columbia have set economy-wide greenhouse gas targets or goals. The best way to drive performance of the federal bureaucracy is to set a binding greenhouse gas emission target.

Create a National Clean Energy Standard: A national renewable portfolio standard should phase out coal nationwide by 2030, require 80% carbon-free electricity by 2030, and ensure 100% carbon-free electricity by 2045.

Procure Grid-Scale Clean Energy: The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) should run competitive, regional procurements for grid-scale clean energy, transmission and grid-scale storage.



A MODERNIZED, EFFICIENT AND EQUITABLE ELECTRIC GRID

Modernize the Grid: To support the distributed generation future, the federal government can directly fund the deployment of smart grid technology.

Invest in Efficiency: Twenty-six states have specific, long-term targets for electric energy savings. They can be expanded with minimum annual federal energy savings target of 3% per year imposed on all public utilities.

Make Distributed Clean Energy Accessible for All: Innovative state-level policies focus on equitable access to clean, distributed energy, and reducing energy costs for low- and moderate-income households. At least half of existing federal tax breaks for clean distributed generation should support low- and moderate-income customers.

ZERO-CARBON TRANSIT

Mandate Clean Vehicles and Invest in Infrastructure: Require at least 50% of all light duty vehicle sales be zero-emission vehicles (ZEVs) by 2030, and 100% by 2050. The federal government must also support a large-scale investment in charging infrastructure.

Create Livable, Walkable Communities: Require states to set aside 5% of their federal highway funding dollars for complete streets projects.

Transform the Foundation of Public Transit: The Federal Transit Administration can repurpose — and expand — the Bus and Bus Facilities grant funds towards electric buses.

Empower Electric Utilities to Enable Clean Mobility: States have pioneered new regulatory models for electric utility participation in the build-out of ZEV infrastructure. The new FERC must ensure that utilities are part of the clean transportation revolution.



BUILDING THE LOW CARBON FUTURE

Unlock Private Capital: Public budgets cannot fund climate mitigation efforts alone. Innovative financial tools and green banks can spark private investment.

Embrace Hybrid Approaches: The future of energy and environmental policy is neither “command and control” nor “market mechanisms” — it is both. Economic tools can drive down costs and increase competition, but you still have to actively choose clean energy over dirty energy.

Research Unanswered Questions: The federal government must invest in research and development to create the next generation of renewable energy and storage technologies, and tackle negative emissions.



WHAT CAN YOU DO?

Listed below are actions you can take to get involved in subnational decarbonization:

1. Talk to a friend about what you learned today to spread the word
2. Decarbonize your own lifestyle
3. Engage in your local community or business in a climate-related activity
4. Call your local representative
5. Run for a position in your local government
6. Continue your education

For more information on how you can take action, scan the QR code or visit www.cbey.yale.edu/looktothestates

