

2023 Issue Paper: Climate Change and Energy

Significant League Positions on Climate Change and Energy

The LWV urges policies to *invest in renewable energy, implement a plan to put a price on carbon, and address the long-term impacts climate change has on public [health](#). Action now is critical to curb the most dramatic impacts of climate change that may occur at warming levels higher than 2 degrees Celsius over pre-industrial levels.*¹

The League of Women Voters stands united with, and in support of, efforts to price carbon emissions, whether cap-and-trade, carbon tax/fee, or other viable pricing mechanisms.² Establish incentives for efficient use of current energy sources and the greater use of alternative energy sources.³

State and local Leagues, and individual League members, have a critical role to play in helping to limit future climate change and protect the planet.⁴

Find the details of all [League positions](#) on the web site.

What to look for in the 2023 Washington State Legislative Session

Continued focus on energy in buildings to reduce: greenhouse gases, energy consumption, health risks, historic and continuing inequities. Shifting from methane to heat pumps and induction cook tops not only saves energy, but reduces energy consumption, reduces toxic exposure, and provides a source of cooling during heat events. All Washington residents should have access to this technology.

Amend the [Climate Commitment Act](#) and [Clean Fuels Standard](#) (2021), primary legislative actions addressing transportation greenhouse gases, to ensure compliance reaches the statutory goals. Significant goals include investment in electrification, described above, and redressing environmental injustice from past energy policy with front-line communities and tribes.

Incorporating benefits of the Federal [Inflation Reduction Act](#) into policy implementation. The IRA provides incentives for energy efficiency upgrades, electrification, and lower carbon building materials, so state policy should focus on incentives in other areas to maximize benefits overall.

¹ [LWVUS Urges Climate Action in the Senate](#).

² 2018 LWVUS Convention resolution.

³ LWVWA Program in Action.

⁴ <https://my.lwv.org/lwvus/position/climate-change?destination=node/14218>

The Situation Now

Energy policy is intertwined with climate change objectives, and climate change already affects or soon will affect nearly every aspect of life in Washington, America, and the World. Because the federal government is slow to take decisive action on climate change, [many states](#)—including Washington—have stepped in with needed progress on environmental and energy policy.

The legislature has made steady progress over the past half-decade in passing bills to reduce greenhouse gas contributions from electricity generation, transportation, landfills, large buildings, and putting a price on carbon. Yet, we have a long way to go, as indicated by the chart below. Even a slight change in the composition of the legislature and leadership of the legislative committees can affect legislative content and which bills enjoy a floor vote.

Passage of the Inflation Reduction Act should provide additional funding to extend this progress, but the specifics of implementation are not yet resolved and will vary across the US depending on region.

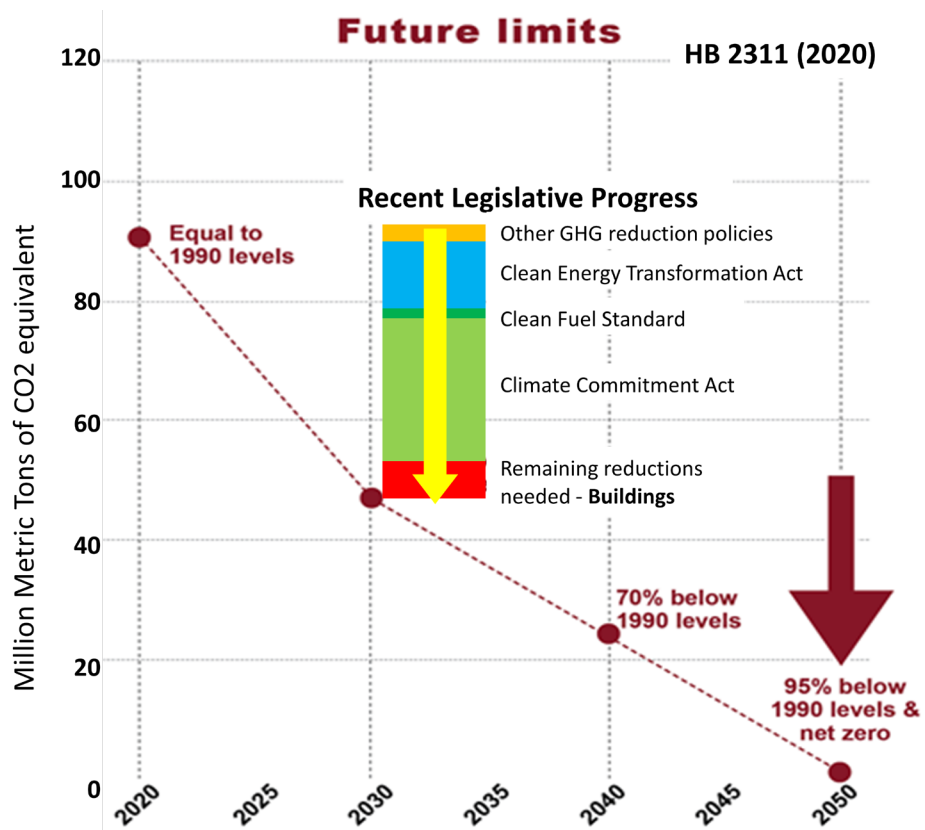


Figure 1 . [HB 2311](#) State greenhouse gas emission limits, passed in 2020, set greenhouse gas limits for WA. Over the past 30 years the emissions have cycled around 100 M metric tons. By 2030, overall greenhouse gas emissions must fall 45 percent below 1990 levels and continue downward. If implemented well, recent legislation should get close, but we must pass additional reductions.

In Washington, [climate change](#) affects farms, rivers, forests, water, shorelines, [health](#), and wildlife. We will need to mitigate the effects such as increased winter rain and earlier snow melt, summer droughts and disappearing streams, higher high temperatures and lower low temperatures. Climate-caused declining river flows plus requirements to maintain in-stream flows to maintain habitat will reduce our available hydro power in some seasons. The decisions, policies, and investments we make in **energy** and **transportation** represent the opportunities we in Washington have to do our part in reducing our contribution to the greenhouse effect.

Recent Legislative Progress in Washington State

- 2019 The Clean Energy Transformation Act ([CETA](#)), SB 5116, commits Washington to an electricity supply free of greenhouse gas emissions by 2045.
The [Clean Buildings](#) bill, HB 1257, that requires owners to improve energy efficiency in large existing commercial buildings and includes some financial incentives.
- 2020 Clean Car Standards, [SB 5811](#), adopts the motor vehicle emissions standards of California—that are aligned with Oregon’s implementation—including the Zero Emission Vehicle (ZEV) program. Stricter greenhouse gas emission limits in [HB 2311](#) require reducing the state’s overall greenhouse gas emissions to 95 percent below 1990 levels and achieve net-zero by 2050.
- 2021 Two achievements stand out that environmentalists have pursued for years.
The clean fuels bill [HB 1091](#) to reduce the carbon content of transportation fuels over time (similar to policies in Oregon and California) to 20 percent below 2017 levels by 2038. The policy is somewhat constrained by requirements for in-state production of biofuels and exempts some fuel uses such as shipping.
The Climate Commitment Act [SB 5126](#) sets a price on carbon with a cap and trade and invest program setting a limit on emissions declining over time, and creating market-tradable allowances all resulting in an escalating price on carbon.
- 2022 Reducing methane emissions from landfills, [HB 1663](#) and [HB 1799](#), is significant because in the near term decades, methane is a far more potent GHG than carbon dioxide. Reducing Greenhouse gas emissions in buildings, [HB 1280](#) and [SB 5722](#) is a prime area for continued legislative focus. Additional incentives for community solar projects, [HB 1814](#), permit residents participate who cannot economically attach solar panels to their abode. Legislative adjustments to the Climate Commitment Act began with [SB 5842](#), and these will continue as we pursue the statutory reductions in greenhouse gases in the state.

For various reasons and for many decades we the people have delayed taking decisive action on climate. We can delay no longer. Besides taking what actions we can in our personal lives, we must enact economy-level incentives and regulation. The LWV supports a price on carbon, but it appears that we may be out of time to rely on that approach alone to control greenhouse gases (GHG) sufficiently to avoid catastrophic climate change. Therefore, we must continue to enact policies through the legislative process, rulemaking, and code revisions to increase efficiency, reduce GHGs, and ensure equity.

Coalitions: the [Northwest Energy Coalition](#) and the [Environmental Priorities Coalition](#).

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