



## RECAP: SOLUTIONS 2020 CLIMATE & CLEAN ENERGY POLICY WORKING GROUP

JUNE 2019



Business Forward conducted a Solutions 2020 Climate and Clean Energy Policy Working Group briefing on Tuesday, June 4, 2019, led by Christy Goldfuss, Senior Vice President of Energy and Environment Policy at the Center for American Progress, and Trevor Higgins, Director of Climate and Domestic Energy Policy at the Center for American Progress.

### **Current State of Climate Policy**

After three years of continuous decline in carbon pollution, emissions rose by 3% in 2018, the second annual increase since 2000. Currently, U.S. emissions are 10.7% below 2005 levels; however, the country's Copenhagen Accord target is a reduction of 17% by 2020. For the Paris Climate Agreement, the U.S. agreed to reduce carbon pollution by 26-28% below 2005 levels by 2025. The U.S. is not on track to meet either of these goals.

Scientists on the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) assert that we must reach carbon neutrality by 2050 globally to avoid a destabilizing level of warming - most encourage phasing out the use of coal entirely far before then.

### **Trump Administration Rollbacks**

The current administration has executed 78 environmental rollbacks, 37 of which are related to air pollution and emissions from drilling and extractions. The most high profile and impactful rollbacks include:

1. Withdrawal from the Paris Climate Agreement
2. Proposed weakening of the fuel economy standards for cars and trucks
3. Repealing the Clean Power Plan
4. Proposing new legal justification for limiting mercury emissions from coal power plants

Even though businesses have conveyed concerns that these actions are detrimental to progress, the Trump administration claims these rollbacks are part of its "energy dominant goal". The U.S. was already the world's largest oil producer in 2017; however, the Trump administration continues to make this a

cornerstone of their deregulatory approach.

### **State-Level Successes**

To date, 24 governors have put policies in place that reduce emissions by up to 25% below 2005 levels by 2025. States such as Hawaii, California, New Mexico, Washington, and Colorado have signed legislation that has pledged carbon neutrality, strengthened renewable portfolio standards, and set higher standards for buildings and super-pollutant chemicals in the industrial sector.

### **Strategies of Successful States**

1. Push renewables as far as possible, but ultimately broaden the definition beyond just renewables to reach 100% clean energy.
2. Implement technology neutrality by regulating negative externalities produced by local industries, such as air pollution or dumping of hazardous waste.
3. Build a coalition of business leaders, environmental justice advocates, and laborers to ensure all parties contribute to climate efforts. This should be replicated at the federal level.

### **The Green New Deal**

In October 2018, the IPCC produced a report on what it would take to stay below 1.5°C of warming, shifting perspectives on the scope and speed of responses necessary to mitigate climate change. The Green New Deal provided a response to this finding, including direct investments to mobilize the U.S. economy and provide an expedited timeline for changes. The Green New Deal has been successful in pushing climate policy to the forefront of voters' minds as we enter the 2020 election cycle, but we know the U.S. will need bipartisan support for climate action to be truly effective.

### **Considerations from the Working Group**

1. **Progress can still be made at the local and state levels during the Trump Administration.** Eric Griffin from the Dallas Regional Chamber in Texas addressed the importance of involving all levels of government in climate action, specifically citing the bipartisan Climate Mayors group. At the municipal level, land use decisions directed by boards of locally elected officials can decide how to spend federal dollars. Short-term decisions made about local redevelopment, where to build houses, and whether to invest in transit or not can lock in long-term infrastructure changes that dictate emissions through 2050 and beyond. Separately, states can use public utility commissions to govern investments - many utilities are preparing to pursue new decarbonization agendas.

**2. Insurance should be offered to businesses for protection against losses that result from climate change and natural disasters.** Laura Dawson from Food Physics and Body Dynamics in North Carolina shared the ways that her business was adversely impacted by Hurricane Florence and the California wildfires. Natural disasters will continue hurting businesses by damaging property and crops across the U.S., yet insurance products remain limited.

**3. New forms of nuclear power could help us reach long-term goals, but additional research is needed.** Steve Jones from Green Energy Enterprises in Ohio spoke about developments in nuclear energy, including the molten salt reactor that promises a reduction in waste, decrease in construction costs, and increase in operation safety. Trevor Higgins suggested that these new reactors would be most useful once current nuclear power plants are shut down and 2030 climate goals are realized.

**4. Small business leaders should lead the climate conversation away from “how much these changes cost” to “how much it will cost if we do not change.”** There is no more credible voice in the climate arena than a small business owner who can articulate how climate change slows them down and costs them money. Small business leaders should speak to local news channels, local candidates, and followers on social media about the real impacts of climate change on their businesses. Submit your experience and testimonials to us at [climate@businessfwd.org](mailto:climate@businessfwd.org).

With the help of more than 60 of America's most respected companies, Business Forward is making it easier for more than 100,000 business leaders from across America to advise Washington on how to create jobs and accelerate our economy. More than 650 mayors, governors, members of Congress, and senior Administration officials have participated in our briefings.

Business leaders who have participated in our briefings have seen their suggestions implemented in the Affordable Care Act, the JOBS Act, the Clean Power Plan, the Toxic Substances Control Act, three trade agreements, and the President's budgets. Many have also shared their recommendations with their representatives in Congress and through phone calls, op-eds, and interviews with local media. Ninety-eight out of 100 business leaders who have participated in a Business Forward briefing would be interested in participating in another one.

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