

Rhode Island Global Warming Solutions Act (H-7827)

While Rhode Island is the nation's leader in offshore wind, we've fallen behind when it comes to the urgent task of cutting carbon pollution. Although we have *goals* for reducing emissions that were reaffirmed through an Executive Order committing Rhode Island to the Paris Accord, we don't have a way to make sure that we achieve these goals. Without requirements or mandates, there is *no way to enforce* these goals. Even worse, Rhode Island has *no comprehensive plans* for achieving these goals.

The fossil fuel era is ending. The time for vague climate goals is over. *Now it's time to pass a climate law that will create jobs, cut carbon pollution, and protect our communities.* The Rhode Island Global Warming Solutions Act (GWSA) mandates economy-wide reductions in carbon emissions. Modelled on similar statutes enacted in Massachusetts and Connecticut years ago, the GWSA would require reducing carbon emissions by 80% below 1990 levels by 2050, with interim targets for 2025, 2035, and 2045.

How does the Global Warming Solutions Act work?

The GWSA works by addressing the three largest sectors that contribute to carbon pollution: electricity, transportation, and buildings. The bill requires a state agency to issue regulations (within a year of enactment) reducing emissions from each sector: Office of Energy Resources for electricity (Section 6); Department of Transportation for transportation (Section 7); and the Building Commissioner for buildings (Section 8). In each sector, the bill outlines certain matters that each agency must consider in issuing regulations and other things that each agency may consider.

Isn't Rhode Island a leader in renewable energy? Why do we need the GWSA?

While Rhode Island is a national leader in both renewable energy and energy efficiency, our programs address only one of three sectors contributing to carbon pollution, the electricity sector. In Rhode Island, like the rest of New England, the transportation sector is both the largest contributor to carbon pollution and the fastest growing sector. To solve this problem, the GWSA addresses statewide carbon emissions across the entire economy, including the transportation sector.

What about the Resilient Rhode Island Act? Doesn't it address climate change?

The 2014 Resilient Rhode Island Act (RRIA) was a good bill and CLF supported it, but it is non-binding. The RRIA only sets aspirational goals for carbon emissions: if the state does not meet those goals, there are no consequences and there are no ways to enforce the law. In contrast, the GWSA sets enforceable mandates and if the government does not follow the law, it permits citizens or nonprofits to bring a lawsuit.

What about the EnergizeRI carbon pricing bill? Wouldn't it reduce carbon emissions?

CLF has always supported the EnergizeRI carbon pricing bill and continues to do so. The GWSA provides a different route to achieving the *same goal of reducing carbon emissions*: the GWSA reduces carbon emissions by regulations, while the EnergizeRI bill reduces carbon emissions by putting a price on carbon. The two bills could work well together because under the GWSA, agencies could opt to control emissions by putting a price on carbon. CLF supports both the GWSA and the EnergizeRI bill (H-7400/S-2188). For more information on EnergizeRI's carbon pricing bill, check out <https://www.energizeri.org/>.

What's happened since Massachusetts enacted a Global Warming Solutions Act?

Massachusetts passed a GWSA ten years ago and *it is working*:

- ☐ Massachusetts made huge gains in solar: installing over 2,000MW and rising to second in the nation for solar jobs.
- ☐ Massachusetts enacted a Clean Energy Standard regulation requiring 80% of electricity sold in Massachusetts to be non-emitting by 2050.
- ☐ Massachusetts set a declining annual cap on in-state electricity carbon emissions from all large, commercial in-state electric power plants.

What's the bottom line?

Rhode Island needs to act *now* to jump-start our renewable energy economy. The GWSA provides mandatory, enforceable, economy-wide reductions in carbon pollution that are consistent with science-based understandings of climate change.

What can you do to help curb climate change?

Contact your State Representative, your State Senator, the Speaker of the House, the Senate President, and Governor Raimondo to ask them to *support* the GWSA.