

The Paris Climate Accord Promise: One Year Later

Despite Roadblocks and Retreats, a Path to Progress

June 2018

The Paris climate agreement is an history-making effort to unite all the countries in the world in the fight against climate change. Countries were able to set their own goals, with all the parties to the agreement working to reduce greenhouse gas pollution and create a more sustainable planet.

On June 1, 2017, President Donald Trump announced that he would move to withdraw the United States from this landmark agreement. The United States is currently the only nation opposing the agreement – an abdication of national leadership on one of the most pressing issues of the 21st century. Meanwhile, other countries are [ramping up](#) their climate efforts and seizing the opportunities presented by a clean energy economy.

Despite President Trump's rhetoric and the efforts of cabinet officials like Energy Secretary Rick Perry, Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Scott Pruitt and Transportation Secretary Elaine Chao, the United States continues to take action. More than 2,700 companies, states, cities, tribal nations, universities, and faith groups [have declared](#) that they support the goals set forth in Paris and are committed to tackling the problem of climate change.

One year after President Trump's climate retreat – and even with hard fights ahead of us – emissions are [continuing to fall](#), and we are still making progress. While this is important, it is not sufficient to meet our climate goals of limiting warming to less than two degrees Celsius. Only a comprehensive federal policy to reduce carbon emissions can ensure that meet our climate goals, and we urge this Congress to come together to enact such a policy.

States and Cities Taking Action

Sixteen states and Puerto Rico have joined the [U.S. Climate Alliance](#), each committing to implement the goals of the Paris climate agreement and cut greenhouse gas pollution by at least 26-28 percent below 2005 levels by 2025. Together, these states and this territory comprise more than 40 percent of the entire U.S. population and a \$9 trillion economy. Other efforts like [America's Pledge](#) are working to tally the targets made and actions taken by states and cities to cut down their emissions. By October 1, 2017, 20 states and 110 cities had enacted greenhouse gas reduction targets. Altogether, the non-federal entities in the United States – the state and local governments – that are committed to the Paris agreement make up [more than one-third of the national emissions](#) and 54 percent of the U.S. gross domestic product.

Carbon Trading Expands

Carbon pricing regulations are legally binding in ten states, and now [New Jersey](#) and [Virginia](#) have started the process of joining the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI). RGGI is a cap-and-trade program that has reduced power sector carbon dioxide emissions by more than [35 percent since 2009](#). In August 2017, the nine RGGI states agreed to [strengthen their commitments](#) in order to achieve a 30 percent reduction in carbon pollution from power plants by 2030, compared to 2020 levels.

Cleaner Transport, Cleaner Air

As agreed to in 2012, the fuel economy and vehicle greenhouse gas emissions standards will require automakers to achieve an average fleet fuel economy of around 54.5 mpg by 2025. This represents a major reduction of emissions from the transportation sector. Compared to a 2016 baseline, the 54.5 mpg standards would [cut 234 million metric tons](#) of carbon dioxide by 2040. In late 2017, transportation surpassed the electric power sector as the [largest source of greenhouse gas pollution](#) in the country.

Driven by a global interest in cleaner transportation, automakers have been investing in electric and zero emissions vehicles. Volvo has announced that all-electric cars will make up [50 percent](#) of its sales by 2025, Toyota declared its plan to offer at least [10 all-electric models](#) by the early 2020s, and GM intends to release [20 electric vehicle models](#) by 2030 as part of its commitment to an “all-electric future.”

Renewable Energy Powers Up

By late 2017, mandatory renewable portfolio standards were on the books in 29 states that represented [56 percent](#) of retail electricity sales. Clean electricity generation technology is cheaper and more widespread than ever before, with solar and wind energy making up [49 percent](#) of all new utility-scale capacity additions in 2017.

The United States installed [10,600 MW](#) of solar capacity in 2017, reaching 53,300 MW of total installed capacity. During that same period, the country added [7,017 MW](#) of wind, for 89,077 MW of cumulative installed wind power capacity. Community solar capacity [doubled in 2017](#). The offshore wind industry is now taking off, with [major new projects](#) announced in both Massachusetts and Rhode Island. In February 2018, the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission [completed a rule](#) that would help electricity markets incorporate cutting-edge energy storage technology, in order to better harness renewable energy systems to meet consumer demand. Renewable energy has never been more prevalent or more affordable than it is today. The cost of utility-scale solar fell by [30 percent](#) from 2016 to 2017, meeting the Department of Energy’s SunShot Initiative target three years early. There are now 250,000 jobs in the solar industry, and 100,000 in the wind industry.

Corporations Take Action

As of October 2017, [1,300 businesses](#) representing \$25 trillion in market capitalization had voluntarily adopted emissions reduction targets. These corporations account for 900 megatons of greenhouse gas emissions every year.

Energy Efficiency Makes a Difference

In 2016, utilities invested [around \\$7.6 billion](#) in energy efficiency, resulting in savings of approximately 25.4 million megawatt-hours. Energy efficiency is not only cutting down on carbon emissions. It is also boosting jobs in a burgeoning industry, with [67,000 new energy efficiency jobs](#) added in 2017.

U.S. Senate Climate Change Task Force



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