



PennEnvironment Your Winter Report

PennEnvironment works to keep climate action on track

Nearly a year after announcing Pennsylvania’s intent to join the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI), one of the nation’s most successful programs for reducing climate pollution, Gov. Tom Wolf vetoed legislation passed by the Pennsylvania General Assembly to prevent the state from doing just that.

H.B. 2025 would have gone much further than just keeping Pennsylvania out of RGGI: It also would have fully revoked the Department of Environmental Protection’s authority to regulate carbon dioxide emissions—the main contributor to the global climate crisis.

“We applaud Gov. Wolf for his veto of the General Assembly’s misguided attack on climate solutions,” said David Masur, executive director of PennEnvironment. “RGGI enjoys the support of a bipartisan group of governors in the region, and this valuable program offers key mechanisms for reducing pollution and fighting climate change. Joining our neighboring states to the north, east and south in this alliance can create a healthier, more vibrant region with clean air that transcends borders.”

Through administrative action many months ago, Gov. Wolf announced that the commonwealth would become a member of RGGI. The program was established in 2009 and currently consists of 10 New England and Mid-Atlantic states. If Pennsylvania joins the program, it’s estimated that the commonwealth could reduce its carbon emissions by 180 million tons over its



In September, PennEnvironment hosted a virtual panel of experts to discuss one of our nation’s most successful climate programs, the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI), and why joining it is a step in the right direction for Pennsylvania.

first decade in the program—equivalent to taking 35 million cars off the road.

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Thanks
for making it
all possible

PennEnvironment Research & Policy Center calls for cleaning up Pittsburgh's Toxic Ten

They're small in number but play an outsized role in endangering the health of Pittsburgh-area residents.

On Sept. 14, PennEnvironment Research & Policy Center was joined by hundreds of concerned citizens for "Toxic Ten Week," an online campaign calling on local officials to

encourage people to register to vote. And, in 2020, it couldn't have come at a more critical time—reports showed that the coronavirus pandemic had caused voter registration rates to plummet in many states.

Our staff, members and volunteers focused our effort on encouraging Pennsylvania's youth (18-29 year olds) to vote, and, over the course of the day, we emailed and called more than 1,000 professors, youth groups and others to get the word out to students to get registered to vote if they weren't already signed up.

All told, PennEnvironment Research & Policy Center and our partners at the Student PIRGs' New Voters Project reached out to 1.6 million people nationwide to increase voter registration.

Despite a changing climate, the Trump administration moved to allow more heat-trapping methane pollution

The Trump administration proposed allowing oil and gas companies to emit more heat-trapping methane, a global warming pollutant that is 28 times more potent than carbon.

On Aug. 29, the administration announced a plan to reverse Obama-era rules at the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency requiring that oil and gas companies install technology to inspect for and fix methane leaks from wells, pipelines and storage facilities. The inevitable result of this rollback: more methane pollution, which will exacerbate global warming at a time when we need to be doing all we can to slow it.

"This move flies in the face of science and the growing call from American citizens and businesses to urgently tackle climate challenges," said Flora Cardoni, field director with PennEnvironment Research & Policy Center. "Instead of giving a green light to the fossil fuel industry to pollute even more, we need to cut pollution faster."

PennEnvironment Research & Policy Center has played a critical role advocating for clean air, and, following the rollback, PennEnvironment members and advocates called on our senators to block this rule.

Get more updates on our work online at <http://pennenvironment.org>.

Staff



During "Toxic Ten Week," PennEnvironment organized local volunteers and activists, like those pictured above, to write handwritten letters urging Allegheny County Executive Rich Fitzgerald to take action to clean up our air.

act on air pollution. The campaign pointed to 10 facilities in the Pittsburgh area—several of which have never been issued Clean Air Act permits—that account for more than 70 percent of the reported industrial air pollution emitted in Allegheny County.

"The Pittsburgh region's worst-of-the-worst polluters have been given carte blanche to darken our skies with haze and put our health at risk," said Zachary Barber, clean air advocate with PennEnvironment Research & Policy Center and coordinator of the Toxic Ten Week project.

PennEnvironment Research & Policy Center has called on local officials to increase penalties for facilities that regularly release illegal levels of air pollution.

PennEnvironment Research & Policy Center helps reach millions on National Voter Registration Day

With all eyes focused on the election this past fall, PennEnvironment Research & Policy Center joined partner groups in Pennsylvania and across the nation to participate in National Voter Registration Day (Sept. 22). The day was created in 2012 to





Mr. James Kelley via Shutterstock

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Yet as the western United States suffered through devastating wildfires, the Gulf Coast recovered from another hurricane, and after Pennsylvania experienced a sweltering, record-hot summer, it was shocking that a majority of members of the General Assembly would take aggressive steps to stop state environmental officials from reducing the Keystone State's climate pollution.

PennEnvironment worked tenaciously to halt the legislative attack on RGGI, getting thousands of Pennsylvanians to call, write and email their state senators and representatives asking them to oppose H.B. 2025. Our staff and members also submitted dozens of letters to the editors in local papers and garnered ongoing media attention to this attack.

PennEnvironment also hosted a virtual panel to educate local residents about RGGI, its successes, and why Pennsylvania would benefit from joining the initiative.

A bipartisan group of officials from Connecticut, Maryland and Delaware discussed their experiences participating in RGGI for more than a decade and why they believe the Keystone State would reap significant benefits from joining the program. Among these benefits are estimates that Pennsylvania could raise \$2 billion during the state's first 10 years participating in the program. Business leaders and nonprofit advocates rounded out the panel to discuss why RGGI makes sense for Pennsylvania. Around 200 Pennsylvanians tuned in to learn more about this program and its successes.

Fortunately, Gov. Wolf is providing bold leadership on the issue: Given a choice between living in the past with dirty fuels or being on the right side of history, Gov. Wolf took the crucial step to veto H.B. 2025 and show that we must protect our communities and future generations across the state from the climate crisis.

The governor's veto took place a week after the state's Environmental Quality Board (EQB) voted 13-6 in support of Gov. Wolf's proposal to join RGGI. EQB's vote triggered a public comment period and is a crucial step for codifying the commonwealth's introduction into RGGI.

"The passage of H.B. 2025 by the Pennsylvania General Assembly serves as a stark reminder that many politicians are lagging behind the science of climate change and the will of their constituents to solve this existential crisis," noted David. "PennEnvironment will continue to advocate in support of Pennsylvania's participation in RGGI and defend the program from attack."

If Pennsylvania joins RGGI, the initiative would help reduce the climate-warming pollution that already affects our cities, such as Philadelphia and Harrisburg, which both average more than 20 days with temperatures over 90 degrees each year.



BruceEmmerling via Pixabay



Kimball Nelson

Thank you for supporting and sustaining our work—still done at a safe social distance—to keep our air and water clean, to defend our public lands, and to protect our climate and environment for future generations.

Your action and support allows us to keep up the work you'll read about in these pages. Thank you for standing with us.

David Masur
Executive Director

Each year, we hold an election for our Board of Directors. Head to our website to read about the candidates and cast your vote today.

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Our mission:

We all want clean air, clean water and open spaces. But it takes independent research and tough-minded advocacy to win concrete results for our environment, especially when powerful interests stand in the way of environmental progress.

That's the idea behind PennEnvironment. We focus exclusively on protecting air, water and open spaces. We speak out and take action at the local, state and national levels to improve the quality of our environment and our lives.

Six Pennsylvania colleges recognized as clean energy leaders

For the hundreds of thousands of college students in Pennsylvania, there's a new ranking to pay attention to: how their campus rates on renewable energy.

On Aug. 19, PennEnvironment Research & Policy Center released its newest report on renewable energy, examining how college campuses across the nation tap into clean energy. "America's Top Colleges for Renewable Energy 2020" ranked six Pennsylvania

colleges and universities in the nation's top tier for sourcing at least 100 percent of their electricity needs from renewable sources. Those campuses are Swarthmore College, Carnegie Mellon University, Bryn Mawr College, Lebanon Valley College, Allegheny College and Northampton Community College.

"College campuses are natural leaders when it comes to transitioning to 100 percent clean, renewable energy," said Ashleigh Deemer, deputy director of PennEnvironment Research & Policy Center. "We're excited to celebrate the fact that so many colleges and universities in Pennsylvania are leading the way in doing just that."

The report also ranked Chatham University second in the nation for the amount of non-electric renewable energy produced on campus per student.

Northampton Community College bolstered its renewable energy usage with a solar parking lot.



Photo courtesy of Northampton Community College