

The Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative:

Make Polluters Pay, Fight for Climate Justice

The climate crisis is at our doorstep, and fossil fuel pollution is to blame. Meanwhile, fossil fuels are harming public health right now, causing air pollution in our communities. At the same time, thanks to unfair and corrupt practices by utility monopolies like Dominion Energy, Virginians have the 10th highest electric bills in the nation and a higher electricity burden than the national average. We need energy solutions and energy justice now.

The solution: The Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI)

RGGI is a cooperative, market-based solution to climate change, currently comprised of nine East Coast states from Maine to Maryland. It is designed to lower energy costs, fund adaptation measures, reduce pollution and bolster new careers in the clean energy economy.



RGGI states set a cap on carbon pollution that lowers every year. They require polluters to pay for their pollution, which incentivizes power plants to build cleaner sources of energy like solar or wind, and to train their workforce in renewables.

Virginia can generate hundreds of millions of dollars through this program, providing valuable funding to help the Commonwealth move to a 100% clean energy economy.¹ This is a solution that can benefit every Virginian family – no exceptions.

Reduce Harmful Fossil Fuel Emissions

By putting a price on carbon pollution, polluters are incentivized to reduce emissions. Since RGGI's inception in 2009, emissions in RGGI states have fallen at a rate two times greater than non-RGGI states even as the GDP in RGGI states grew 3% more than non-RGGI states.² By joining RGGI, Virginia can cost-effectively cut our carbon emissions by 30% by the year 2031.³

Lower Electricity Bills

Virginia residents suffer from a higher than average “energy burden,” which means the proportion of income spent on energy bills. Virginia has the 10th highest average residential electricity bills in the country, and the energy burden is even greater in Virginia’s low-income communities.⁴ By joining RGGI, we can access more than \$40 million each year to invest in energy efficiency programs like weatherizing and upgrades to buildings, which in turn helps Virginians use less energy and pay less on their energy bills. Other RGGI states have \$49.7 million in annual bill savings through efficiency investments.³

Invest in Clean Energy Jobs

Virginia lags far behind neighboring states in solar energy development and does not have a single utility-scale wind farm. Virginia also has an enormous amount of untapped potential in energy efficiency, which is a big job creator – Virginia already has more than 79,000 consistent jobs as of 2019.⁵ Joining RGGI and investing in efficiency will make clean energy more cost-effective and create new jobs.



Protect Public Health

Fossil fuels are causing a crisis in public health, particularly for Virginia's 700,000 asthmatics. In fact, Richmond has been labeled as the Asthma Capital of America several times within the last five years by the Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America. Air pollution in RGGI states between 2009-2014 produced a total of \$5.7 billion in public health co-benefits across the region, including 300-830 fewer premature deaths, 420-510 fewer cases of acute bronchitis, and 8,200-9,900 fewer asthma attacks.⁶

Fund Flooding Solutions in Virginia

Anyone who lives in Hampton Roads knows that flooding has become one of the most challenging public policy issues facing coastal Virginia. The rising of ocean waters due to climate change, combined with the area's sinking land, will cause as much as 7.5 feet of sea level rise by century's end, according to the Virginia Institute of Marine Sciences.⁷ The Dutch engineering firm Fugro estimates that Norfolk needs at least \$1 billion to fully adapt to the flooding threat posed by climate change.⁸ The billion dollar price tag equals Norfolk's entire annual operating budget. Funding from RGGI is one way to solve this growing problem.



By joining RGGI, Virginia can lower energy bills, and hold utility monopolies accountable while investing in renewable energy, energy efficient homes, and coastal protection programs.

76% of Virginia voters support requiring energy companies to pay for the pollution they put in the air; 73% think that Virginia should prioritize investing in renewable resources like wind and solar; and 61% think that Virginia should join RGGI to curb carbon pollution.⁹ As a win-win solution, the Virginia should formally join RGGI as soon as possible.

TAKE ACTION: Help Virginia Join RGGI!

Sign our online petition: bit.ly/VA-RGGI-petition

To get involved as a volunteer, contact our Virginia Grassroots Coordinator, Paolo Mutia, paolo@chesapeakeclimate.org



Works Cited

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