

# New York to get one of world's most ambitious carbon reduction plans

June 20 2019, by Catherine Triomphe

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Under a proposed New York state law, most fossil fuel burning thermal plants will need to shut down and vehicles will need to produce zero emissions over the next three decades

New York state lawmakers on Wednesday passed one of the world's most ambitious laws aimed at countering climate change, under which

fossil fuel power plants and gasoline cars will be phased out by 2050.

But the move came as President Donald Trump's administration finalized a rollback of an Obama-era plan to cut [harmful emissions](#) from [coal plants](#), triggering an outcry from opposition Democrats who called it a "giveaway to big polluters."

New York's plan places it in the company of Great Britain, France, Sweden, New Zealand, and other jurisdictions that have set their sights on [carbon neutrality](#) by the middle of the century—though the majority have yet to pass binding legislation.

The northeastern state of 20 million people is led by Democratic Governor Andrew Cuomo and both the upper and lower chambers of its legislature are controlled by the party.

The new law, known as the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act, is emblematic of a growing movement among the American left toward the principles of a so-called "Green New Deal" that would fundamentally reshape the US economy and create green jobs.

It foresees an 85 percent reduction in overall greenhouse emissions by 2050 compared to 1990 levels. The remaining 15 percent of emissions may be offset in order to achieve a net of zero through, for example, carbon sinks including reforestation efforts.

Over the next three decades, most fossil fuel burning thermal plants will need to shut down and vehicles would need to produce zero emissions—effectively spelling an end to gasoline and diesel cars on the road.



US President Donald Trump announced in 2017 his plans to kill the Clean Power Plan that had been introduced by former president Barack Obama two years earlier but had been put on hold by the Supreme Court

"While Washington is asleep at the wheel, New York is leading the way," said Todd Kaminsky, a state senator and one of the bill's sponsors.

After clearing the state's senate on Wednesday, it was headed for the assembly.

New York has set an intermediate goal of reducing emissions by 40 percent by 2030 compared to 1990 levels.

By 2040, 100 percent of the state's electricity generation will be renewable—an area where it has already made significant strides. Its current energy mix is 28 percent nuclear, 16 percent hydro-electric, and 35 percent natural gas.

## Decline of coal

Within the US, New York joins California and other Democratic-controlled states that are looking for ways to reduce their carbon footprint in the face of inaction by the administration.

Trump pulled the US out of the Paris [climate change](#) accord in the first year of his presidency and has set about systematically dismantling environmental regulations put in place by his predecessor Barack Obama.





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These included the Clean Power Plan, which was finalized in 2015 but had been put on hold by the Supreme Court.

The Environment Protection Agency has been working since then on its replacement, known as the Affordable Clean Energy (ACE) rule, which had to pass a period of public comment.

The new rule proposed to restore to the states the power to set their own targets for greenhouse gas emissions and foresaw a net reduction by 2030 of power sector carbon dioxide emissions of 33 to 34 percent compared to 2005 levels—a far less ambitious goal than the regulation it replaced.

It will likely be challenged by Democrat-controlled states and could wind its way up to the Supreme Court.

Democrat House Speaker Nancy Pelosi called it a "stunning giveaway to big polluters, giving dirty special interests the green light to choke our skies, poison our waters and worsen the climate crisis."

But the reality is likely more complicated as [coal](#) plants continue a long term trend of decline owing to market forces.

The US energy mix is quickly shifting away from coal and toward [natural gas](#), as a result of the fracking boom and its cost advantage, as

well as to renewables.

"The Trump Administration's attempts to revive obsolete industries like coal have proven futile: since he has taken office, over 50 coal plants have closed, putting us over halfway to retiring the US coal fleet," said Beyond Carbon, a campaign funded by tycoon Michael Bloomberg.

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Citation: New York to get one of world's most ambitious carbon reduction plans (2019, June 20) retrieved 30 April 2024 from

<https://phys.org/news/2019-06-york-world-ambitious-carbon-reduction.html>

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