

FEDERAL RENEWABLE ENERGY POLICY



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REQUESTED ACTION:

- Seek legislative and regulatory solutions to provide for the continuation of the Property Assessed Clean Energy (PACE) program, which allows local governments to invest in projects that reduce energy consumption and greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions.
- Provide incentives that encourage the development and use of renewable energy sources such as wind, solar, biomass, hydropower, and post-recycled municipal solid waste. Additionally, support legislation that would allow the widest possible range of renewable energy sources to qualify as resources to help California and the nation meet renewable energy goals.
- Provide adequate funding for the Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant (EECBG) to assist local governments in implementing energy efficiency and conservation strategies.
- Provide financial incentives to States that adopt GHG emissions reductions targets and programs. In addition, provide funding to mitigate GHG emissions impacts.
- Provide financial support for regional and countywide planning processes – such as California’s Regional Blueprint Planning Program – that integrate transportation and land use to reduce projected vehicle miles traveled, promote jobs/housing proximity, and transit-oriented development.
- Provide assistance for data collection and quantifying GHG emission sources and levels, vehicle miles traveled, and other data to assist local governments and regional agencies in addressing climate change in environmental documents for long-range transportation plans.
- Oppose legislation that allows federal standards to supersede California’s ability to adopt stricter vehicle standards.

BACKGROUND: In the 111th Congress, lawmakers debated a range of energy and climate bills aimed at enhancing America’s energy independence. In the House, lawmakers approved comprehensive global warming legislation (HR 2454) designed to cap the emissions of GHGs at 17 percent below current levels by 2020 via an emissions allowance trading program; the bill also would have required utilities to produce 20 percent of the nation’s electricity from renewable energy sources by 2020. Across Capitol Hill, there were a number of cap-and-trade bills introduced in the Senate, as well as several variations of renewable energy legislation. The leading renewable energy bill, S 1462, would have required electric utilities to meet 15 percent of their electricity sales through renewable sources of energy by 2021.

In the new 112th Congress, it is expected that there will be less emphasis placed on passage of a cap-and-trade bill, with a renewed push to approve a nationwide renewable energy standard. For his part, President Obama has proposed deriving 80 percent of U.S. power from clean sources, including emission-free nuclear power, clean coal and natural gas, as well as wind and solar energy, by 2035.

At the state level, the California Legislature in 2006 approved the landmark Global Warming Solutions Act (AB 32), the first-of-its-kind law requiring the State of California to reduce GHG emissions to 1990 levels no later than 2020. Under the act, the California Air Resources Board is granted broad authority to reduce pollution via regulations, market mechanisms, and other actions.

In order to establish a framework to achieve the global warming goals of AB 32, the Legislature passed in 2008 legislation (SB 375) that provides incentives for local governments and developers to follow new conscientiously-planned growth patterns through improved land use and transportation planning.

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