

THE PROBLEM

The most recent Connecticut GHG Inventory report indicates that we are not on track to meet our medium and long-term greenhouse gas reduction targets, and that “the state will need to significantly accelerate annual reductions” in order to achieve our goals.

When the first round of comprehensive state laws to address climate change were passed, Connecticut was a leader on the issue. In recent years, however, we have not kept pace with the best practices being implemented across the country, including by our neighboring states. These jurisdictions have adopted more stringent targets, established greater agency accountability for action, and provided mechanisms for enforcing their climate laws.

A COMPREHENSIVE SOLUTION

If we are to be successful in achieving our greenhouse gas reduction obligations, we must follow the lead of our neighboring jurisdictions and provide accountability and enforceability for our landmark climate law. Climate friendly policies that move us along the path to a net zero future will strengthen our economy while improving public health and protecting our communities from the most devastating impacts of climate change. But we must act deliberately and consistently.

Updating Emission Reduction Targets

The best and most recent science indicates that we have already committed ourselves to a changed climate based on current emissions. The magnitude of those impacts, however, is still within our control – if we act decisively. Achieving net-zero emissions by 2050 is now recognized as essential for avoiding the most catastrophic impacts of climate change. To ensure that we maintain steady progress towards our medium and long-term reduction goals, that target should be formally adopted, along with interim benchmark and sector-specific emissions reduction targets.

It is time for Connecticut to update its landmark climate law to reflect current circumstances and needs.



Establishing Accountability for Meeting Necessary GHG Reductions

To reach our climate goals, we need a commitment to act comprehensively across state government. State agencies and other administrative decision-making bodies must incorporate an evaluation of climate impacts in their decision-making. When an agency’s action results in increased emissions, such action must be accompanied by appropriate offsetting mitigation measures.

Enhancing Enforceability of Global Warming Solutions Act Compliance

Connecticut must clearly establish the ability of citizens to enforce the Global Warming Solutions Act. Connecticut has a long history of recognizing the value of empowering citizens to ensure that the state meets its commitment to preserving the public trust in our land, air and natural resources. Since 1971, Connecticut’s Environmental Protection Act has authorized the citizens of this state to take action to ensure the state is fulfilling its obligation to protect the public trust in our natural resources from unreasonable pollution, impairment, or destruction. This authority means little if it is not clear that it includes the essential ability to enforce our landmark climate law as well. Meeting our climate obligations is fundamental to protecting our natural environment.

Expanding Authority to Adopt Policies and Regulations to Meet our Greenhouse Gas Reduction Obligations

Within the framework of accountability and enforceability, our administrative agencies must have the ability to act to meet the climate crisis. Agencies should have the authority to promulgate regulations and establish programs to mitigate climate emissions in order to ensure success in meeting our statutorily mandated greenhouse gas reduction obligations.

Only with stronger accountability and enforcement mechanisms, can our state's climate law achieve the GHG reductions it was intended to. We all deserve the right to clean air and a sustainable future.



MORE INFORMATION

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