



CLIMATE JUSTICE

A PRIMER FOR ELECTED OFFICIALS

We need elected officials to be climate champions who vote for positive climate policies and who recognize what it means to support climate justice for our state. We don't all need to be experts on climate or energy policy, but it's important to have a baseline knowledge of what climate justice means and why it's so important.

WHY DOES NH NEED CLIMATE JUSTICE?

Granite Staters' health and livelihoods are already being damaged by changing climate and increasingly extreme weather. Here's how climate change is harming NH communities:

- **ROAD WASHOUTS:** NHPR reports that since 2022 NH has had a fund to help towns pay for hazard mitigation and for road repairs because disasters, such as road washouts, are striking faster than FEMA reimbursements can be delivered to the state.¹
- **HEALTH PROBLEMS:** NH healthcare workers are observing² increases in a variety of health conditions affected by climate, including asthma prevalence, asthma severity, Hepatitis A, Vibrio, cyanobacteria infections, skin diseases, allergies, emergency room visits, prevalence of Lyme, West Nile, and other tick and mosquito-borne diseases, and deaths of patients with lung and heart conditions.
- **SEA RISE:** Salt water is contaminating drinking water wells as far as 3 miles inland across the NH Seacoast due to a phenomenon known as sea-level induced groundwater rise, reports NHPR in Aug 2023³
- **FARMERS:** Due to changes in climate, NH farmers have to learn new agricultural practices, with the help of USDA and NH Extension, NHPR reported in Aug 2023⁴ **MAPLE PRODUCERS:** WMUR reported in Feb 2022 that sugaring might be impossible in NH in another 50 years.⁷
- **SKI INDUSTRY:** The business association Ski NH identified climate change as the industry's #1 threat in the Oct 2022 NH Business Review.⁵
- **BEYOND NH:** Importing harmful fossil fuels hurts communities in extraction zones for those fuels. We are part of a global community and our impact on the climate negatively affects others around the world

WHAT DOES CLIMATE JUSTICE LOOK LIKE IN NEW HAMPSHIRE?

Climate justice acknowledges that the impacts of the climate crisis are not felt equally or fairly between rich and poor, or older and younger generations. The climate crisis must be looked at through a human rights lens so we can understand how it disproportionately impacts historically marginalized groups, and consider its effect on issues like housing, health care, and immigration and militarism. In NH, climate justice looks like:

- **Transition the coal plant in Bow to solar and battery storage and push for a similar transition of other fossil fuel peaker plants in the state.** In just one hour, the coal plant in Bow releases as much carbon as the average person emits in 26 years. Peaker plants - energy facilities that are only called on to produce energy at times when the regional demand peaks - must also be transitioned to renewable energy and battery storage projects to reduce the harmful greenhouse gas emissions created when our energy needs are the highest. We should also work with ISO-NE (our regional energy grid operators) to increase use of demand response resources to shave the peak so we need fewer polluting energy sources.
- **No asphalt plant near a low-income Nashua neighborhood** because it would have generated air pollution that would have disproportionately affected the health and home values of those residents.⁹ Additionally, we should reject any extractive or harmful projects that would disproportionately impact vulnerable communities.
- **Develop off-shore wind** to create thousands of NH jobs, save NH ratepayers millions of dollars, and curb climate change.¹⁰ Utilize the grid tie at Schiller station in Portsmouth to get that electricity into the grid in an efficient and cost-saving way.
- **Utilities that serve our workforce and businesses.** In March 2023 WMUR reported that NH had the second-highest electric rates in the country.¹¹ This contributes to NH's affordable housing crisis and inflates prices, such as food costs. Prices are the result of a decade of poor energy policy that has made us overly reliant on fracked methane. While **Community Power** is giving residents some local autonomy, our utilities still desperately need to be modernized by **expanding net metering, improving efficiency and demand response, increasing interconnectivity, and upgrading transmission lines** to achieve lower prices.
- **No false solutions. In the 2023 report¹²** to the UN Environmental Programme, independent experts discouraged **carbon capture** and **solar geoengineering** because they would introduce particles with dangerous health effects,¹³ exacerbate massive marine die-off from acidification, and increase the radiative heating of the lower stratosphere.¹⁴ These dangerous activities have already been banned in the nearby states of Rhode Island¹⁵ and Connecticut.¹⁶ **Green hydrogen** uses 5,000 liters of water to produce a single megawatt hour.
- **Ban Polyfluorinated Substances and support Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR).** All lakes sampled in Southern NH by NHDES contain PFAS, and plastics are a major source of PFAS as documented by Northeastern University's PFAS Project Lab.¹⁸ EPR is a policy that assigns producers responsibility for the lifecycle of their products and encourages innovation in recycling.¹⁹ EPR is endorsed by American Beverages.²⁰
- **No fossil fuel expansion or leasing.** We know that in order to stop the worst impacts of the climate crisis, we have to transition away from fossil fuels. Building more fossil fuels or opening up more land to fossil fuel leasing will only increase our collective greenhouse gas emissions. Importing fossil fuels to New Hampshire also negatively affects the communities along the route of extraction and transportation of these harmful fuels.

OUR POSITIONS ON PAST AND CURRENT BILLS

BILL	YEAR	SPONSOR	STANCE	TOPIC
SB73	2021	Soucy (D) Watters (D) Perkins Kwoka(D)	✓	This bill establishes a green building standards initiative as part of the low to moderate income housing loan program and makes a \$1 appropriation for this purpose. The bill also establishes a commission to study green housing and utility source options
HB 208	2023	Chretien (D)	✓	E stablishing greenhouse gas emission reduction goals for the state and establishing a climate action plan.
HB633	2023	Horrigan (D) Wheeler (D) Read (D)	✓	Prohibits electric distribution companies from having market share greater than 50 percent and restricts electric rates increases to the Consumer Price Index
HB 1014	2024	Paige (D)	✓	Requires school districts and private high schools to develop programs to inform high school students about registering to vote.
HR30	2024	W. Thomas (D) Caplan (D)	✓	Adds climate literacy to the K-12 curriculum
HB1289	2024	Wheeler (D)	✓	Study committee to transition Bow coal plant to renewables
HB1630	2024	Parshall (D) Levesque (D)	✓	Extended Producer Responsibility
HB1644	2024	Vose (R)	✗	Shift clean energy portfolio standards from solar/wind to nuclear
HB1398	2024	Vose (R)	✗	Pay utilities more for administering net metering
HB1477	2024	Potenza (R) Haskins (D)	✓	Requires environmental surety bonds
HB1499	2024	Wilhelm (D) Kenney (D) Germana (D)	✓	Study committee for the civilian clean energy, community resilience, and conservation corps
HB1472	2024	McWilliams (D)	✓	Creates rebates using existing funds to help low and moderate income households buy electric vehicles
CACR14	2024	Horrigan (D)	✓	Providing that the state maintain and improve a clean and healthful environment for present and future generations
HB1291	2024	Read (D)	✓	Enables a second accessory dwelling units for workforce housing
HR28	2024	W. Thomas (D) Peréz (I)	✓	Urging for the compensation for injuries from PFAS and for the closure and cleaning of sites affected by PFAS
SB320	2024	Watters (D) McGhee (D) McWilliams (D) Cormen (D)	✓	Requiring the public utilities commission to establish a gas and electric performance incentive mechanism
SB501	2024	Fenton (D)	✓	Facilitates driver licenses for noncitizens residing in NH
HB596	2024	Meuse (D)	✓	Prohibiting the use of racial profiling in law enforcement activities and in sentencing
HB368	2024	Cannon (D)	✓	Provides protections for persons receiving gender-affirming health care and gender-affirming mental health care.
SB390	2024	Watters (D) Vail (D)	✓	Extends "critical habitat" to included the projected future range of a species

Want help on a bill you're sponsoring?

Contact our Organizing Director chantelle@350nh.org

FAQS

What's wrong with natural gas?

Natural gas is methane. It releases CO₂ when burned. Natural gas is also incredibly prone to leakage and spills and is 80x more warming than carbon when it leaks into the atmosphere. Production of natural gas most often comes from hydraulic fracturing ("fracking") which is a damaging extraction process.

What about job loss?

For example, employment for drivers who deliver liquid fossil fuels, like heating oil or propane.

We demand a transition to renewable energy that is just for all people and that prioritizes job creation and economic justice. This includes retraining, job placement, entrepreneurial seed funding, and early retirement options for displaced workers.

Why should New Hampshire have climate action policies?

What about the federal government or other countries?

Populations who are impacted the most by the climate crisis are the ones who contribute to the crisis the least. Places like New Hampshire have the resources and ability to transition to clean, renewable energy instead of perpetuating destructive fossil fuels. We could be a leader on this issue if we had the political courage. See Climate Justice: A People's NH Climate Action Plan.²¹

Why do we need to prioritize transitioning the coal plant in Bow to solar and eliminating the use of fossil fuel peaker plants?

The coal plant in Bow has failed repeated pollution "stack tests," and continues to pollute the air, water, and environment. The coal plant and other fossil fuel peaker plants in New England receive ratepayer-funded "forward capacity payments" from our regional energy grid operators, ISO-NE, costing ratepayers an extreme amount of money to fund dirty energy plants that only get called on at peak energy usage. Instead of funding these dirty fuels, ISO-NE could prioritize demand response and transitioning of fossil fuel peaker plants to renewable energy and battery storage.

Who's going to pay for climate policies?

Solar and wind have been the two cheapest sources of energy since 2019. Claiming that there is no funding available for renewable energy, environmental justice, and climate change issues is unreasonable. Inaction on climate will cost us far more money than funding a just transition, as increasingly worse storms cause trillions of dollars in destruction and opportunity cost. We have access to state funds and many federal funding opportunities to address climate change, like the Inflation Reduction Act and Bipartisan Infrastructure bill.

Won't businesses in NH push back?

NH businesses issued their first report on Climate Change Concerns in 2015.²⁴ Businesses are affected by climate change just like residents—assets are threatened by climate disasters, extreme weather disrupts daily operations, health impacts take a toll on human resources, and instability hurts the economy.

Why Climate "Justice"? What is intersectionality?

Social and environmental justice are intertwined and environmental advocacy that disregards this connection is harmful and incomplete. Intersectionality is the complex way in which the effects of racism, sexism, homophobia, classism, and other forms of discrimination combine, overlap, or intersect—especially in the experiences of people in historically marginalized groups. When it comes to climate change, we know that historically marginalized groups are more likely to face the negative impacts from climate change and fossil fuel infrastructure,²⁵ so our analysis of climate policies requires a climate justice lens.

SOURCES

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Additional sources on intersectionality in climate justice:

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