

LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMISSION

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California makes history with new package of climate-change laws

Local Government Commission helps lay groundwork for legislative successes

SACRAMENTO, CA – Already a global model in the fight against climate change, additional new landmark legislation that establishes long-term climate goals and pollution-reduction targets for California’s environment, economy and communities was passed by the state Legislature and signed into law by Governor Jerry Brown today (Oct. 8).

This historic package of climate policies and standards solidifies the California’s role of climate and clean-energy leadership and fosters innovative solutions to mitigate climate-change impacts, bring green jobs and economic development to local communities, and move the state closer toward a more sustainable and resilient future.

“For over a decade, California has been leading the world’s climate response effort,” said Kate Meis, the Local Government Commission’s executive director. “The sustained commitment of leading local governments working alongside a visionary state government has paved the way for this historic legislation. These new laws reinforce California’s framework of climate action by adding adaptation actions to more far-reaching pollution-reduction targets, providing guidance and certainty to our communities, businesses and local governments.”

The LGC has been working to support ongoing state leadership on climate mitigation and adaptation and the passage of these bills, both directly and through its membership network of more than 700 local elected officials and community members.

During this legislative session, the LGC worked with a coalition of partners – including The Nature Conservancy, Defenders of Wildlife, Climate Resolve, the National Resources Defense Council and the League of Conservation Voters – to advocate and comment on proposed legislation, meet with key legislators, and testified on several occasions to set the tone and focus of the overall climate-legislation package.

The LGC worked with legislators and Administration officials to raise the public profile of climate-change mitigation and adaptation through events like the California Adaptation Forum and the Statewide Energy Efficiency Collaborative Best Practices Forum and practical programs like CivicSpark and the Alliance of Regional Collaboratives for Climate Adaptation, which helped Governor Brown to incorporate more regional considerations in Executive Order B-30-15, and contributed to the form of AB 1482, SB 246 and SB 379.

Since the introduction of these bills on the Senate floor, the LGC brought attention to the critical and unique role that local governments play in advancing California’s climate goals and the importance of taking a regional approach to adaptation and resiliency strategies, implementing climate-smart investments more transparently and efficiently, and empowering underserved communities to act on local climate-change impacts.

“California has repeatedly shown that we can have a thriving economy while still addressing climate change,” said Kif Scheuer, the LGC’s climate-change program director. “This legislation reiterates and reinforces that approach, and demonstrates that California can be both healthy and climate-resilient. The Local Government Commission is proud to have been a partner in this history, and we look forward to working with our members and state partners to realize this vision of our shared future.”

Key climate legislation that the LGC worked on this session

With the passage of these five climate-smart bills, California continues to lead the nation in fighting climate change. Taken as a whole, the legislative package will stimulate employment, generating thousands of green jobs, and further invigorate California's clean economy.

- **SB 350** (De Leon and Leno) will spur innovation and investment in a sustainable California and improve public health by setting targets of 50% utility power provided by renewable energy sources and a 50% increase in energy efficiency in existing buildings by 2030. (A third target, the 50% reduction in petroleum use, was stripped from the bill after lobbying by the oil companies.)
- **SB 246** (Wieckowski) establishes the Integrated Climate Adaptation and Resiliency Program (within the Office of Planning and Research) to coordinate regional and local efforts with state adaptation strategies to address climate-change impacts. It also establishes a central hub for information and tools to help avoid duplication of efforts as we fight extreme climate events.
- **SB 379** (Jackson) requires cities and counties to include climate adaptation and resiliency strategies in the safety elements of their general plans to enhance community safety and climate protections.
- **AB 1482** (Gordon) requires state agencies to promote the use of climate-adaptation strategies to inform planning decisions and ensures that state investments consider climate-change impacts when developing infrastructure to address adaptation.
- **AB 744** (Chau and Quirk) will help implement SB 375 initiatives by lowering parking maximums and encouraging infill development.

Although the petroleum-use target was removed as a result of heavy lobbying by the oil industry and big businesses, SB 350 still represents a dramatic plan to reshape California's energy landscape. The approved 2030 targets for 50% renewable electricity and a doubling in efficiency of electricity and natural gas use are nonetheless major accomplishments – and perhaps unprecedented for a single legislative session.

Nonetheless, as a practical matter, Governor Brown's Administration already has the authority to take most of the steps needed to reduce oil use in vehicles, including the Zero-Emission Vehicle mandate, the Sustainable Freight Strategy, the Low-Carbon Fuel Standard and SB 375 Sustainable Communities planning measures.

In addition to watering down SB 350, legislative leaders were also unable to secure enough votes to pass SB 32 (Pavley), which would have strengthened California's landmark Global Warming Solutions Act of 2006 (AB 32) by requiring the state to cut carbon emissions to 40% below 1990 levels by 2030, and 80% below those levels by 2050.

Ongoing LGC support to implement innovative climate-change legislation

While not all of these new approved bills are as ambitious as originally written, the LGC will continue to keep our members informed and support implementation of these landmark policies through key programs and initiatives, including:

- The Statewide Energy Efficiency Collaborative (SEEC)
- The Alliance of Regional Collaboratives for Climate Adaptation (ARCCA)
- CivicSpark, AmeriCorps Fellowship Program
- The California Adaptation Forum

ABOUT THE LGC: The Local Government Commission (lgc.org) is a nonprofit organization fostering innovation in environmental sustainability, economic prosperity, and social equity. We help transform communities through inspiration, practical assistance and a network of visionary local elected officials and other community leaders.