

MINNESOTA'S PATHWAY TO 100%

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What is a renewable energy standard?

A renewable energy standard is a law that sets goals for the amount of renewable energy our utilities produce as a part of their overall electricity production. Iowa was the first state to pass a law like this, back in 1983. Since then 29 states and Washington D.C. have all enacted renewable energy standards.

What is the history of renewable energy standards in Minnesota?

In 2007, Governor Tim Pawlenty and Minnesota's legislature created our first renewable energy standard by passing the Next Generation Energy Act. This legislation set a goal for Minnesota to reach 25% renewable energy by 2025 (a goal which has been met 8 years early). It also set goals to reduce Minnesota's greenhouse gas emissions 80% by 2050.

What types of energy sources does this legislation define as renewable?

This legislation defines "renewable" energy as electricity produced from solar, wind, small hydroelectric facilities, hydrogen and biomass.

What is the difference between "carbon-free" and "renewable" energy?

This legislation defines carbon-free energy as electricity produced without emitting carbon. This includes electricity from sources like nuclear energy that do not produce any carbon but are not renewable.

How were the benchmarks in this bill developed?

The goals in this legislation are based off of public commitments and other statements Minnesota's utilities have made about their existing pathways to clean energy. These are ambitious goals designed to speed up that clean energy transition and significantly reduce pollution from the energy we produce. The bill covers all electricity generating utilities. Xcel Energy, the state's largest electric utility, would be need to meet its goals earlier and include more renewables than our smaller utilities.

What impact will this bill have on climate change?

This legislation will significantly reduce the amount of climate change causing pollution that Minnesota emits from producing electricity. But most importantly it sets a high standard for climate change action that other states in our region and the rest of the United States can follow.

How will this impact energy prices for Minnesotans?

This legislation allows Minnesota to modify this plan, i.e. an off-ramp, if meeting our renewable energy goals has a significant impact on energy costs or reliability for Minnesotans. Our current renewable energy standard has actually lowered renewable energy costs for our state. No utility in Minnesota has ever used the existing off-ramp. Setting long term energy goals for Minnesota creates a clear roadmap for utilities to follow. This allows them to plan for the declining cost of renewables and provide us with the most affordable energy possible.

How will this affect communities with existing power plants?

This legislation requires our state to meet these targets in a way that maximizes the benefits for all Minnesotans, particularly those most affected by the clean energy transition. It does this by directing the Public Utilities Commission to ensure that we create high-paying jobs, protect workers, strengthen impacted communities, and reduce air pollution while maintain affordable electricity, particularly for low-income Minnesotans.

Have other cities and states done anything like this?

Yes. Twenty nine states and Washington D.C. have all enacted renewable energy standards. Six states – California, Hawaii, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York, Oregon, and Vermont – all have renewable energy goals of 50% or more.

Hawaii and **California** have set goals legislatively to reach 100% carbon free energy. **New Jersey's** Governor Phil Murphy has issued an Executive Order to directing the state to plan for 100% clean energy by 2050.

Governors Andrew Cuomo of **New York**, Tony Evers of **Wisconsin**, Michelle Lujan Grisham of **New Mexico**, Janet Mills of **Maine**, Jared Polis of **Colorado**, J.B. Pritzker of **Illinois**, Steve Sisolak of **Nevada**, and Gretchen Whitmer of **Michigan** have all pledged publicly to move their states to 100% clean energy by mid-century.

In Minnesota, Rochester, Saint Louis Park, and Minneapolis have already committed to transition to 100% clean energy by the early 2030s.

Does this bill set goals for our entire economy or just electricity?

This legislation only sets goals for Minnesota's electricity sector.

If it's just electricity, how are we addressing other parts of the economy?

In addition to accelerating our use of renewable energy, we will need to:

- Strengthen our commitment to making all our buildings more efficient while creating equitable pathways to good-paying, sustainable jobs.
- Invest in electrification of our vehicles and homes, prioritizing our low-income, rural, and most-impacted communities.
- Improve our land, water, & air by promoting healthy forestry and land use in urban, suburban, & greater Minnesota. We can reduce carbon pollution while protecting our land.
- Prioritize the communities most impacted by a changing climate and the transition away from fossil fuels and build new infrastructure to support our transition.

Additional legislation is being proposed that tackles other sources of carbon emissions here in Minnesota.