



Written by [Raven Clabough](#) on May 17, 2017

## Virginia Governor Signs Climate-change Executive Order

Despite efforts by the Trump administration to roll back some of the Obama administration's draconian climate-change rules, the state of Virginia has elected to forge ahead with measures to address greenhouse-gas emissions.

Democratic Governor Terry McAuliffe (shown) signed an order on Tuesday that directs the state's energy regulators to curb greenhouse-gas emissions, claiming that the state has to "fill the void" created by the Trump administration, the *Washington Examiner* [reports](#).



Within his first 100 days in office, President Trump signed an executive order to roll back Obama-era climate-change regulations impacting the coal industry, CNN writes. The prime target of the order was Obama's Clean Power Plan, which forced states to cut carbon emissions from power plants. The executive order also reverses a ban on coal leasing on federal lands, ends rules to curb methane emissions from oil and gas production, and minimizes the influence of climate change and carbon emissions in policy and permitting decisions.

"I am taking historic steps to lift restrictions on American energy, to reverse government intrusion and to cancel job-killing regulations," Trump stated after signing the order.

President Obama's Clean Power Plan (CPP) was nothing more than a repackaged version of the cap-and-trade deal he proposed that did not pass even a Democrat-controlled Congress. However, Obama was able to circumvent Congress by instead enlisting the help of the Environmental Protection Agency to create the CPP, which asks states to reduce carbon emissions from power plants by 32 percent below 2005 levels by the year 2030.

And like the cap-and-trade proposal, the CPP would be expected to cause a substantial increase in energy prices. According to the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, the CPP would cost American taxpayers \$51 billion.

The U.S. Supreme Court provided states a reprieve in February of last year when it voted 5-4 to grant a request by 27 states and various companies and businesses to block the implementation of the plan while the courts continue to evaluate the legality of the CPP. With Trump's March executive order, it seems possible that the CPP may finally be put to rest.

But while many states begrudged the CPP, Virginia supported the plan and even considered joining the East Coast's Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative.

Governor McAuliffe seeks to impose his own carbon-emissions mandate on the state of Virginia by way of executive order. His order directs officials to form a task force that will be responsible for issuing a report at the end of the year on the implementation of climate change rules.

"The threat of climate change is real, and we have a shared responsibility to confront it," McAuliffe insisted. "Once approved, this regulation will reduce carbon dioxide emissions from the



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commonwealth's power plants and give rise to the next generation of energy jobs. As the federal government abdicates its role on this important issue, it is critical for states to fill the void."

Environmental groups are celebrating McAuliffe's order and are hopeful it will inspire other states to follow suit.

"This bold action demonstrates that when Washington fumbles and falls, with the right leadership, the states can lead," said attorney Will Cleveland of the Southern Environmental Law Center in Charlottesville. "Hopefully Gov. McAuliffe's actions today will inspire policymakers in other states to follow a similar course."

But Virginia Republicans have criticized Governor McAuliffe's move as overreach that panders to the governor's largest campaign contributors while raising electric prices and hurting economic growth.

"Governor McAuliffe's executive order is the worst kind of virtue signaling," stated Virginia Republican Party spokesman David D'Onofrio. He added, "Meanwhile the free market has led to significant year-over-year reduction in CO2 emissions in the U.S. Terry McAuliffe's decision to 'resist' common-sense environmental policy will drive up prices for consumers, cost Virginians jobs and make it even more difficult to grow our economy."

Others took issue with McAuliffe's use of executive order to impose such substantial regulations.

Virginia House of Delegates Speaker William Howell (R-Stafford), who is retiring, called McAuliffe's order "a broad assertion of regulatory authority, Washington-esque in both its nature and scope" that ultimately circumvents the legislative process.

Under McAuliffe's directive, the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality has until December 31 to present a proposed regulation to the state's Air Pollution Control Board, but with Virginia voters electing a governor on November 7, the future of McAuliffe's order remains highly uncertain.

According to the *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, the reaction among the leading gubernatorial candidates has fallen along party lines, with Democrats Ralph Northam, the lieutenant governor, and former Congressman Tom Perriello expressing support for McAuliffe's measure and GOP frontrunner Ed Gillespie calling it "job-killing and cost-increasing."

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