



Berlin to Consider Radical New Climate Law in Coming Referendum

Germany's capital Berlin is set to consider a sweeping revision to its existing local environmental laws. If passed on March 26, the changes to Berlin's existing Climate Protection and Energy Transition Act passed in 2021 which called for the German city to achieve carbon neutrality by 2045.

If passed, the proposed revision to the current law would rapidly accelerate that already-dubious goal of carbon neutrality by 2045 to the year 2030. It would also empower the city to appoint an unelected "Climate Protection Council" to monitor the city's progress toward that goal. The council would consist of selected (not elected) citizens of Berlin to meet with experts and choose measures going forward on how to meet their ambitious goals.

The referendum is binding and, if passed, would become law and the current nebulous goals of the previous law would become obligations that the city must meet or run afoul of the law.

According to the terms of the referendum, the Climate Protection Council would gain nearly plenipotentiary powers when it comes to climate issues in the city.

Even the left-wing Social Democratic Party (SPD) in Berlin warns that too much power would be entrusted with the Climate Protection Council. The SPD complains that the new amendment would allow for "immediate [action] in the event of non-fulfillment of obligations," which many believe would obligate the city to immediately implement radical environmental measures in order to meet those obligations. In other words, if the "total amount of carbon dioxide emissions is expected to be exceeded," the Council could demand that the city take immediate measures to fall in line with the obligation, which were once only goals.

To meet the 2030 obligation, for instance, climate radicals estimate that Berlin would have to reduce carbon emissions by 70 percent by 2025 and 95 percent by 2030 (compared to 1990 levels). Absent those emissions reductions, the City of Berlin would have to explain exactly why they missed those goals/obligations.

Supporters of the new revision complain that the Berlin Senate — the governing body of the city — is dragging its feet when it comes to climate.

"The Berlin Senate is not acting quickly enough to make our city fit for the future. The state government does not want to implement the switch to renewable energies in Berlin until 2045. So we will pay for gas and oil imports for 22 more years and thus finance dictatorships instead of investing the



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Berlin



Written by [James Murphy](#) on March 14, 2023

money in our own city,” the Berlin2030 [website](#) states.

But many worry that giving an unelected council such power would, in fact, undermine democracy. It would give the so-called Climate Protection Council power to act on climate issues despite not truly being democratically legitimate.

In addition, the amendment calls for property owners to make mandatory energy upgrades to properties without passing on those costs to tenants.

Or, as the Berlin2030 website explains, “The implementation of the climate commitments must not be at the expense of the tenants.”

If these mandatory upgrades, which could include solar panels on every residence in the city, prove too expensive for landlords, then who will pay for them?

Many worry that privately owned gas powered vehicles could be taken away from citizens.

“There is a danger that the possibility of immediate measures — which, according to the SPD, are not democratically legitimized — will be used excessively,” German website [Pleiteticker.de](#) advises. “If the climate referendum is successfully implemented, it will therefore not only be expensive for Berliners, but there will be many more restrictions on freedom than under the previous the Socialist-Green Senate — Berliners may then have to say goodbye to their cars completely.”

The Berlin airport, which has been a recent site of climate [protests](#), may suffer dire consequences under the new amendment as well. With CO₂ reductions of 70 percent by 2025 and 95 percent by 2030 (compared to 1990 levels), it’s almost a certainty that the current flight schedule to and from the airport will have to be drastically reduced.

Back in reality, politicians — even Green politicians — don’t believe that the measure has much of a chance to pass.

But what if it did?

Imagine a 21st-century city — a national capital — plunged into chaos by the whims of a city council. Watching such a thing might be just what people need in order to see what a world led by a climate-obsessed few would look like and propel us into a much more reasonable future.



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