



Executive Order 57

# A Pathway to Strong Climate Action in Virginia

Michael Town, Executive Director, Virginia League of Conservation Voters  
Bill Holland, State Policy Director, League of Conservation Voters



**LEAGUE OF CONSERVATION VOTERS**



**VIRGINIA LEAGUE OF  
CONSERVATION VOTERS**



# A Moral Imperative

“Climate change is a problem which can no longer be left to a future generation. When it comes to the care of our ‘common home,’ we are living at a critical moment of history.”

– Pope Francis



*Remarks delivered September 23, 2015 at The White House*



# Our Role in the Climate Fight

## Virginia has a duty to step up

- Climate change is impacting public health, public safety and our economy
- Cutting carbon pollution here in Virginia is about something much bigger and we are falling behind





# Our Role in the Climate Fight – cont'd

## U.S. Carbon Reduction Depends on State Action

- Cutting greenhouse gases is the right move for Virginia
- We have the chance to be a national leader
- Other states are already taking advantage of this opportunity



# States Moving Forward

**The Des Moines Register**

**MidAmerican Energy aims for 85% wind power**



**New Jersey surpasses 1 gigawatt of installed solar energy**

**CHARLOTTE  
BUSINESS JOURNAL**

**N.C. ranks second in solar construction for second consecutive year**



# What's at Stake: Public Health

## Air Pollution is Affecting Virginians' Health

Incidence of lung disease in Virginia:

- 172,239 cases of pediatric asthma
- 555,422 cases of adult asthma
- 412,839 cases of COPD
- 5,163 cases of lung cancer
- *Source: American Lung Association's 2016 Estimated Prevalence and Incidence of Lung Disease*





# What's at Stake: Public Health – cont'd

## Thousands of Virginians are Struggling to Breathe

- Climate change makes life harder for those suffering from lung disease
- Risks include increased ozone, particle pollution, extreme weather impacts and allergens
- Fossil fuel-burning power plants increase these risks with direct pollution and emissions that drive climate change
- Children, older adults and low-income individuals are at the highest risk

*Source: American Lung Association*



# What's at Stake: Public Safety

**Climate  
Change is  
Putting  
Us in  
Harm's  
Way**



*Source: WAVY-TV*





# What's at Stake: Public Safety – cont'd

## Rising seas mean more flooding, more property damage

- An estimated \$17.4 billion in property value, and 54,000 homes with 107,000 residents sits less than 5 feet above the high tide line in Virginia
- Rising storm surge and flooding threatens nearly 420,000 properties along Virginia's coast that would require \$92 billion of reconstruction costs
- The Virginia Institute of Marine Science predicts tides, heavy rainfall and storm surge will worsen



# What's at Stake: Our Economy

## Climate change threatens our biggest industry: Agriculture

- Economic impact of \$52 billion annually
- Responsible for 311,000 jobs in the Commonwealth

*Source: Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services*





# What's at Stake: Our Economy – cont'd

## Climate disruptions to agriculture will get worse

- Climate change stressors include increasing weeds, diseases and insect pests as well as severe weather
- By mid-century, these impacts will be increasingly negative on most crops and livestock.

*Source: National Climate Assessment*



# What's at Stake: Our Economy – cont'd

## **Economic Backbone of Hampton Roads is at risk**

- The U.S. Navy alone has an annual economic impact of \$10 billion and is responsible for 77,000 jobs
- A recent report shows Norfolk Naval Station will flood roughly 280 times a year by 2050 (instead of the current 10), if sea level rise reaches the midrange of predictions.

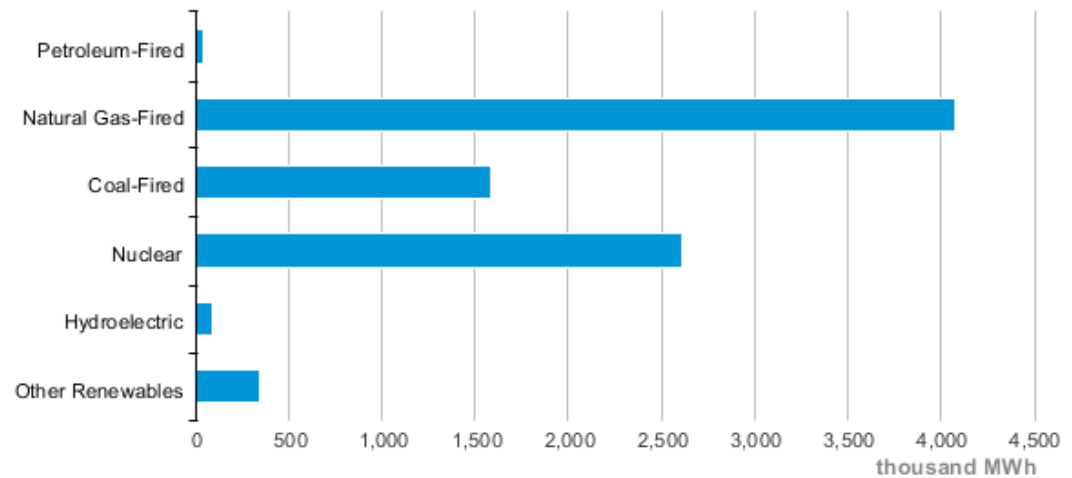
Source: The Virginian-Pilot



# Virginia's Current Energy Mix

- Fossil fuels clearly dominate Virginia's energy mix
- A move away from this reliance is a move in the right direction
- Other states are making this transition and creating jobs

Virginia Net Electricity Generation by Source, Jun. 2016



Source: Energy Information Administration, Electric Power Monthly



# Our Neighbors are Leading on Solar

## North Carolina

- 2,300 MW installed solar
- Ranked 3<sup>rd</sup> nationally
- 6,000 jobs
- 15<sup>th</sup> per capita

## Maryland

- 465 MW installed solar
- Ranked 11<sup>rd</sup> nationally
- 4,300 jobs
- 14<sup>th</sup> per capita

## Virginia

- 22 MW installed solar
- Ranked 32<sup>nd</sup> nationally
- 1,963 jobs
- 37<sup>th</sup> per capita

Source: Solar Energy Industries Association 2015 Data



# Our Expectations for Virginia's Climate Plan

- First and foremost, we need to see real carbon reductions
- A strong plan *cuts total carbon pollution from electricity generation by 40% by 2030*
- We can do this by reducing fossil fuel use, improving energy efficiency and promoting and removing barriers to carbon-neutral sources like solar and wind
- Virginia will see economic, public health and environmental gains



# Our Expectations for Virginia's Climate Plan

- Secondly, *it covers new AND existing power plants*
- Standards should not be limited to just those built in the future or constrained to our current fleet
- **A mandate for 1500 MW of clean solar by 2025** will help meet energy needs
- Our energy policy needs to be forward-looking and diverse





# This Commission's Responsibility to Virginians

## Too Much is at Stake for this Plan to Fall Short

- This workgroup's final recommendation will be far-reaching
- You have a moral obligation, economic opportunity and civic duty to Virginians to act
- It's a matter of legacy: Will we catch up in the climate fight or fall further behind?



Questions?