

The federal government isn't the sole determinant of climate change policies

Other segments of the U.S. public sphere are putting policies into place

Benefits of policies combatting climate change

- Policies and regulations can improve public health, such as by reducing smog in cities
- Authorities can be better prepared for climate-induced changes like floods and droughts

Advocate 1: City governments



- Urban residents are more likely to support policies that regulate CO₂
- City governments are collaborating on climate efforts, and have signed onto agreements that hold them to measuring and reporting emissions
- 13 American cities have signed onto the C40 Cities Initiative, which is a network of 80 cities that represents 600 million people worldwide, and 8 cities also joined the Carbon Neutral Cities Alliance (CNCA)
- CNCA cities, like Seattle, Minneapolis and Washington, D.C., have pledged to cut emissions by at least 80% by 2050
- Coastal cities, such as Miami and New York City, have announced plans to combat flooding from storms and protect against sea level rise

Advocate 2: State governments



- States have the autonomy to take action on combatting climate change, and once they have passed these measures there is no obvious federal action to undo them
- Texas and 28 other states now have renewable portfolio standards, and 8 others have voluntary goals
- Large states like California can spur broader action – this was seen when in the 1980s California had higher fuel-efficiency standards than the federal mandate, but Congress eventually brought standards up to Californian levels because the state had such a large auto market
- California has also passed the AB 32 legislation
 - This legislation would reduce greenhouse gas emissions to 1990 levels by 2020, and then to 80% below 1990 levels by 2050
 - It would reach this goal through the promotion of renewable energy and fuel efficiency as well as incentivizing low-carbon fuels and zero-emissions vehicles

Sources: Jessica F. Green, "The Trump administration can't entirely roll back progress on climate change. Here's Why." *The Washington Post*, February 10, 2017.

More non-federal government advocates for climate change policies



Advocate 3: American companies

- CEOs see climate change as bad for business; for example, extreme weather can interrupt supply chains
- Firms can enact environmental policies to be better prepared for extreme weather and regulatory changes that would otherwise have negative impacts on profit margins
- Moreover, it is important for U.S. companies to adapt to regulations and restrictions in other countries to be competitive in a global economy
- U.S. companies, like cities, have joined onto international agreements like RE100 and the We Mean Business (WMB) initiative
- Both of these agreements have committed firms to transitioning to 100% renewable energy, and WMB also seeks to put a price on carbon and reduce commodity-driven deforestation
- Companies that are a part of the RE100 include Apple, Bank of America, Bloomberg LP, Google and Walmart



Advocate 4: American legal system

- Regulations cannot easily be undone, and if the Trump administration wanted to rescind regulations they would need to submit an explanation on why their action is necessary
- Litigation against the rollback of Obama administration climate policies like the Clean Power Plan (CPP) can slow down the Trump administration's efforts

Utilities' use of coal

- Many utility companies are already planning on the CPP being put in place
- Coal plants are being retired and most utility companies are not planning on building replacements
- Shutdowns of coal plants are likely to continue because many U.S. plants were built before the 1980s, and are reaching the end of their lifespan
- In the 1990s, 50% of U.S. electricity generation was from coal, but today it has dropped to about 33%
- This transition is partly due to competition from natural gas

Sources: Jessica F. Green, "The Trump administration can't entirely roll back progress on climate change. Here's Why." *The Washington Post*, February 10, 2017.