

**GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA
SESSION 2021**

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SENATE BILL 702

Short Title: State Clean Energy Goal for 2050. (Public)

Sponsors: Senators Nickel and Garrett (Primary Sponsors).

Referred to: Rules and Operations of the Senate

April 8, 2021

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

AN ACT TO ESTABLISH A STATE GOAL OF ONE HUNDRED PERCENT CLEAN ENERGY BY 2050 AND TO PROMOTE THE CREATION OF GREEN JOBS.

The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts:

Whereas, since 1880, climate change has increased the global average surface temperature by 1 degree Celsius (1.8 degrees Fahrenheit); and

Whereas, climate change is expected to increasingly impact North Carolina's temperatures, precipitation, and sea level with harmful consequences in coming years; and

Whereas, climate change and global average temperature increases are primarily due to human-caused fossil fuels emissions, including coal, oil, and natural gas, according to the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, National Academy of Sciences, American Meteorological Society, United States Environmental Protection Agency, United States Department of Defense, and numerous other leading scientific, academic, and governmental authorities both in the United States and internationally; and

Whereas, a final agreement of the United Nations Conference of Parties (COP21), including the United States and a total of 195 nations, was reached in Paris, France, on December 12, 2015, entered into force on November 4, 2016, and stated the aim to "hold the increase in the global average temperature to well below 2 degrees Celsius above preindustrial levels and pursue efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5 degrees Celsius above preindustrial levels"; and

Whereas, scientists have concluded the concentration of carbon dioxide, the leading greenhouse gas in the Earth's atmosphere, is currently and consistently over 400 parts per million (ppm) and will likely stay above this level for the indefinite future for the first time in millions of years; and

Whereas, the decade of 2011 to 2020 was the hottest decade on record, and 2020 tied for the hottest year on record worldwide, according to Copernicus, the European Union's climate change research service; and

Whereas, an increase in the global average temperature, if not stopped, will have major adverse impacts on both natural and human-made environments due to longer, more intense heat waves, prolonged droughts, rising sea levels, ocean acidification, and more intense and frequent extreme weather events; and

Whereas, these physical effects are expected to lead to water scarcity, food insecurity, increasing numbers of refugees, increased poverty, and mass extinctions of species; and

Whereas, according to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, natural disasters cost the country \$95 billion in 2020 due to natural disasters ranging from hurricanes to wildfires to drought; and



1 Whereas, in 2018, Hurricane Florence devastated North Carolina, with over 40
2 confirmed fatalities and damage across the State approaching an estimated \$16.7 billion; and

3 Whereas, climate models predict that the country can expect more of these
4 catastrophic and costly events over time; and

5 Whereas, studies completed by the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the Risky
6 Business Project, Duke University, and others point to the severe economic costs of climate
7 change and continuing use of fossil fuel, estimating billions of dollars a year in costs nationally
8 and trillions globally; and

9 Whereas, leading economists, policy experts, and business leaders conclude that
10 transitioning to a clean energy economy available for all would create millions of green jobs
11 nationally, improve our living standards, and boost economic growth in coming years; and

12 Whereas, low-income communities and communities of color in North Carolina and
13 the United States are inordinately exposed to pollution that causes serious health problems, such
14 as cancer and asthma, from fossil fuels, including the dirtiest coal-fired power plants, which
15 produce coal ash and which are disproportionately located in communities of color; and

16 Whereas, a Stanford University and University of California, Berkeley study
17 concludes the United States energy supply could be based entirely on renewable energy by the
18 year 2050 using current technologies and 80% on renewable energy by 2030 while creating
19 numerous green jobs; and

20 Whereas, municipalities, organizations, businesses, and academic institutions
21 throughout the world have set a goal to achieve carbon or climate neutrality by 2050 or earlier;
22 and

23 Whereas, over 600 American colleges and universities have made a commitment to
24 reduce greenhouse gases, including Appalachian State University, Blue Ridge Community
25 College, Carteret Community College, Catawba College, Central Carolina Community College,
26 Davidson College, Duke University, Elizabeth City State University, Fayetteville State
27 University, Guilford College, North Carolina Central University, North Carolina State
28 University, Queens University of Charlotte, Southeastern Community College, the University of
29 North Carolina at Chapel Hill, the University of North Carolina at Charlotte, the University of
30 North Carolina at Greensboro, the University of North Carolina at Pembroke, Wake Technical
31 Community College, and Warren Wilson College; and

32 Whereas, some of the statistics regarding North Carolina's use of solar energy include
33 the following: (i) installing 6,487 megawatts of solar electric capacity through 2019, (ii) investing
34 over \$9 billion on solar installations in the State, (iii) having more than 200 solar companies at
35 work throughout the value chain in North Carolina, which employ over 6,000 people, (iv) ranking
36 third in the nation in installed solar capacity, providing enough energy to power 780,000 homes,
37 and (v) having more offshore wind energy potential than any Atlantic state; and

38 Whereas, in the last five years, solar photovoltaic system prices in North Carolina
39 have dropped by 45%; and

40 Whereas, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's Fifth Assessment Report
41 recommended a global goal of achieving near zero greenhouse gas emissions or below, which is
42 necessary to stabilize the global average temperature to avoid climate catastrophe; Now,
43 therefore,

44 The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts:

45 **SECTION 1.** Article 7 of Chapter 62 of the General Statutes is amended by adding
46 a new section to read:

47 **"§ 62-133.10A. One hundred percent clean energy goal for North Carolina by 2050.**

48 In order to avoid climate catastrophe, to promote job creation and economic growth, and to
49 protect the Earth for current and future generations, it shall be the goal of the State that one
50 hundred percent (100%) of the total retail sales of electricity in North Carolina shall be generated
51 from renewable energy resources by December 31, 2050. The State Energy Office, in

1 consultation with the Commission and the Public Staff, shall develop a plan to achieve this goal
2 and shall submit the plan to the 2022 Regular Session of the 2021 General Assembly upon its
3 convening."

4 **SECTION 2.** This act is effective when it becomes law.