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Virginia Governor Signs Sweeping Renewable Energy Legislation
April 16, 2020 by Alyssa Danigelis

Virginia Governor Ralph Northam signed legislation this week that promotes energy efficiency, sets a schedule for closing nearly all of the state's fossil fuel power plants, and requires electricity to come from **100% renewable sources**.

Called the Virginia Clean Economy Act, the new laws incorporate renewable energy directives that the governor previously issued last September. According to the governor's office, the act:

Establishes renewable portfolio standards. By law, Dominion Energy Virginia must be 100% carbon-free by 2045 and Appalachian Power must be 100% carbon-free by 2050. Nearly all coal-fired plants are required to close by the end of 2024.

Establishes energy efficiency standards. The act also requires third-party review of whether energy companies meet the savings goals.

Advances offshore wind. The act says that 5,200 megawatts of offshore wind generation is "in the public interest."

Advances solar and distributed generation. Also in the public interest: 16,100 megawatts of solar and onshore wind. The law expands net metering to help rooftop solar to advance. The new law also requires Virginia's largest energy companies to construct or acquire more than 3,100 megawatts of energy storage capacity.

In addition, the Virginia governor signed an amendment to the Clean Energy and Community Flood Preparedness Act, requiring the state to join the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI), a mandatory market-based program to cap and reduce CO2 emissions from the power sector in New England and the Mid-Atlantic states. Virginia is the southern-most state to join the initiative, the Washington Post reported.

To be in compliance with RGGI, Virginia will need to establish its own carbon dioxide cap-and-trade program that reduces emissions from power plants.

The Richmond Times-Dispatch reported that the legislation should make it easier for Dominion Energy to obtain regulatory approval for an estimated \$7.8 billion offshore wind project planned off the Virginia Beach coast.