



To: Interested Parties

From: Justin Balik, State Program Director

Date: November 11, 2022

RE: Governors leaned into climate and won. Now they must deliver.

No races on the ballot in 2022 will impact climate action more than state elections. The results of the 2022 midterms are a huge victory for climate action at the state level at a critical time. Tuesday's elections saw victories across the board for Democratic governors who have pledged to move further and faster on decarbonization. In this election, **at least 17 governors were elected who have collectively pledged an 80% reduction in their states' emissions.**

Democrats also gained trifectas in Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan and Minnesota—and now have the opportunity to move forward on more aggressive climate plans. The results of the 2022 midterm elections provide a major opportunity for progress confronting the climate crisis and building a just, thriving, and inclusive clean energy economy.

Now that historic climate investments in the federal Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) are law, states will be a central battleground in the fight against climate change in the coming months and years. Strong leadership from governors will be key to implementing the IRA and in advancing ambitious state climate policies to decarbonize the most polluting sectors in our economy. **Put simply: state level action is essential to ensure we hit our climate targets.**

The 2022 election represents a clear turning point in the politics of climate, building on over a decade of mobilization at the local, state and federal levels. Unlike in past cycles, Democrats facing strong political headwinds didn't shy away from climate, they leaned in. Democratic governors on the ballot and new candidates for governor released new climate plans, enacted new policies, began implementation of federal climate investments and prioritized addressing environmental justice in their states. These governors leaned in on climate and they won.

It's clear that voters expect their leaders to take bold action on the greatest threat we face. These governors, many of them now backed by new legislative majorities, must now act with urgency to deliver on their commitments by prioritizing the enactment of bold new policies to reduce climate pollution and invest in the economy of the future.



States have a generational opportunity to both implement and build on the federal victories the climate movement has secured over the past year. 2023 needs to mark the beginning of an era of accelerated state climate leadership. Governors should begin their terms prepared to mobilize their entire administrations to go further and faster on climate than ever before.

Results and The Path Forward in Pivotal States

Michigan: Governor Gretchen Whitmer championed Michigan’s clean energy transition by [promoting the growth](#) of [electric vehicle jobs](#) and accelerating the decarbonization of Michigan electric utilities. The Governor was reelected over her Republican opponent Tudor Dixon, who described her climate policy as “[deregulation](#).” Whitmer’s [MI Healthy Climate Plan](#) outlines next steps on the horizon for her administration, such as generating 60% of Michigan’s electricity from renewable sources by 2030; increasing clean transportation options like public transit by 15% per year; and reducing emissions from heating homes and businesses by 17%. According to [polling conducted by Evergreen and Data for Progress this year](#), 71% of Michigan voters want to see Whitmer fight for federal climate and clean energy funds from the IRA and 66% want to see Michigan produce more clean energy. Heading into her second term, Governor Whitmer [has identified climate change as one of her top priorities](#). **Now that Michigan will have a Democratic legislature for the first time in decades,** Governor Whitmer must pursue every avenue for enacting her plan, particularly her 60% renewable electricity target as well as consumer incentives for electric vehicle purchases and the plan’s electrification goals for mass transit and school buses.

Minnesota: Governor Tim Walz ensured that Minnesota became the first Midwestern state to adopt [clean car standards](#), giving Minnesotans expanded and cleaner choices for buying cars. They defeated Republican challengers Scott Jensen and Matt Birk, who had [pledged to repeal Clean Cars Minnesota](#) and [refused to discuss climate change](#) because it was too much of a “lightning rod.” **With the support of a Democratic legislature, Walz can now pursue policies outlined in their new [Minnesota Climate Action Framework](#),** including establishing a 100% clean electricity standard, building out a network of electric vehicle charging stations, and implementing a low carbon fuel standard. The Governor released his plan just weeks before the election and made a point to [note the “stark contrast”](#) between him and his opponent on climate.

Wisconsin: Governor Tony Evers, a former public school science teacher, [has prioritized Wisconsin’s clean energy transition](#) despite a hostile legislature. Evers convened the Governor’s Task Force on Climate Change, which produced a [comprehensive report](#) outlining 55 strategies to establish Wisconsin a leader in the fight against climate change. Meanwhile, Evers appointed members of Wisconsin’s



Public Service Commission who [have voted](#) to transition more of Wisconsin's electricity away from fossil fuels. His opponent Tim Michels [rejected established science on climate change](#). Evergreen and Data for Progress found that [sixty-five percent of Wisconsin voters would like to see the state produce more energy from clean sources](#), and Evergreen Action made a [significant ad buy](#) in the Madison market in the runup to praise and defend Evers's ambitious climate plan. **Governor Evers now has a mandate to utilize every tool at his disposal to advance Wisconsin's clean energy transition.**

Pennsylvania: Governor-elect Josh Shapiro ran on [increasing—nearly quadrupling—Pennsylvania's alternative energy portfolio standard](#) from 8% to 30%, and on setting Pennsylvania's [most ambitious ever target for greenhouse gas reduction](#)—net zero by 2050. Shapiro [rejected the false choice](#) between growing jobs and fighting climate change, and he defeated his climate—and election-denying opponent Doug Mastriano who [called climate change “pop science” and a “theory.”](#) An [August 2022 poll](#) indicated that 62% of Pennsylvania voters say lawmakers should make limiting air pollution a priority and 62% believe the state needs more rules to protect air and water from oil and gas pollution. **Governor-elect Shapiro must seize the opportunity, particularly with a potential Democratic House of Representatives, to ensure Pennsylvania remains competitive while the American economy transitions to clean energy.** Key actions for Governor-elect Shapiro include protecting Pennsylvania's progress towards decarbonizing the power sector (such as its potential membership in the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative) and overhauling Act 89, the Commonwealth's primary transportation funding and governance law.

Maryland: Governor-elect Wes Moore, an author, investment banker, and nonprofit executive, was elected over his far-right opponent Dan Cox. Moore campaigned on strong action to reduce emissions, [calling for 100% clean electricity by 2035](#) and [declaring](#), “The urgency of the climate crisis is here. We owe it to ourselves, our state and our future generations to take bold actions now.” Cox, on the other hand, has [rejected climate science and dismissed fears about the impacts of climate change](#). Outgoing Gov. Larry Hogan had [vetoed](#) legislation increasing Maryland's renewable portfolio standard and [refused to sign](#) legislation strengthening Maryland's greenhouse gas reduction targets and requiring pollution reductions from buildings. Governor-elect Moore ran on [a plan for eight specific actions](#) to fight climate change in his first 100 days in office. Under a Democratic trifecta, Maryland is poised to be a true national leader on climate. In addition to maximizing the full benefits of the IRA, **Moore's administration will be faced with the implementation of the [nation-leading Climate Solutions Now Act](#).**

Massachusetts: Governor-elect Maura Healey has championed climate action throughout her career, including by [suing ExxonMobil](#) for misleading the public and



investors about the impact of climate change. Her [climate plan](#) commits to aggressively reducing climate pollution from the power sector, buildings and transportation. Her plan commits to 100% clean electricity by 2030, sets an aggressive timeline for electrifying transit and school buses, and giving municipalities full authority to ban gas hookups in new construction. Her plan also emphasizes community-centered decision making and workforce development opportunities. Whether through its own bold policies, or [in federal court](#), **Massachusetts has often pointed the way forward on climate for the rest of the country** and is poised to do so once again under the leadership of its new Governor and a Democratic legislature.

Colorado: Governor Jared Polis decisively won a second term, following a first term in which Colorado passed many ambitious laws to advance the fight against climate change, including setting a target of a [90% emissions reduction by 2050](#); [funding a just transition](#) for communities impacted by the closure of coal power plants and coal mines; a series of [big policies](#) to [decarbonize buildings](#); and [incorporating greenhouse gas reductions into transportation planning](#). Polis won in a landslide against opponent Heidi Ganahl, whose climate strategy was to [increase oil and gas drilling](#). Polis identified fighting the climate crisis as [one of his top priorities](#) and now must honor that commitment by **moving swiftly to adopt California's Advanced Clean Truck rule before the end of the year and following soon after with California's latest Clean Car Standards.**

Maine: Governor Janet Mills was reelected in a contest with former Gov. Paul LePage, who has in the past [falsely claimed that the Earth was cooling](#). During Mills's governorship, she [signed legislation increasing Maine's renewable portfolio standard](#) to 80% by 2030, [set a goal of installing 100,000 heat pumps by 2025](#) (and Maine is 80% of the way to the goal) and adopted the [Maine Won't Wait climate action plan](#), charting Maine's path toward carbon neutrality by 2045. LePage [supported drilling for oil off Maine's coast](#) but [opposed developing offshore wind energy](#), while **Mills ran on her strong climate record and on [saving Mainers money on home energy bills](#)**, noting that "\$5 billion a year comes out of Maine people's pockets to support the fossil fuel industry for heating."

Oregon: Governor-elect **Tina Kotek led the Oregon House through passage of landmark climate laws like Oregon's clean fuel standard and its clean electricity standard during her tenure as Speaker.** She beat out her opponents Christine Drazan and Betsy Johnson, both of whom fought hard as members of the Oregon Legislature to block climate progress that Kotek was advancing. An [October 2022 poll from Data for Progress](#) shows that "climate change and the environment" are the top issue that Democratic voters in Oregon want their elected officials to focus on, and the Oregon



League of Conservation Voters ran [digital ads](#) highlighting [Kotek's strong record](#) of fighting climate change.

New York: Governor Hochul took office last year and immediately took decisive action to further cement New York's status as a climate leader. Even as she prepared for a competitive election for her first full term in office, Governor Hochul **announced a [new initiative to advance Green Schools in disadvantaged communities](#) and secured a nation-leading [transition to an all-electric school bus fleet by 2035](#). Hochul committed New York to adopting new, stronger Clean Car standards** requiring all vehicle sales to be zero emission by 2035. Going forward, Governor Hochul must ensure the state advances a final Scoping Plan commensurate with the ambitions of the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act and that the state equitably deploys the \$4.2 billion investment secured by the passage of [the Environmental Bond Act](#). Governor Hochul must also elevate the All-Electric Buildings Act as her top priority for state budget negotiations.