

# U.S. Progress on

by Thomas Peterson

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We live in a world where one person can make a difference. Whether it is one governor with a vision for a better, safer world and the strength to see it through; one stakeholder with a great idea and the guts to be its champion; or one citizen with the courage to speak out and show us a better way. People across the United States have changed our world when it comes to climate change.

## Five Drivers for Change (for the Better)

Today, our nation is approximately 75% closer to its goals for a safer atmosphere (1990 carbon emissions levels by 2020) than it was in 2007.<sup>1</sup> The trajectory of carbon pollution into the next decade has fallen because helpful actions have risen—not because the economy changed and we found more natural gas, although that's a part (less than 30%<sup>1</sup>)—but because we decided to act today as if tomorrow mattered, and do smart things that made sense.

You can count the big ones on one hand.

**1 Clean and renewable energy for our supply of heat and power.** More than 30 states have enacted clean energy standards, and virtually every state offers a range of programs to diversify energy sources. State utility regulators control more than \$100 billion<sup>2</sup> of investment in new energy every year, reminding us that small changes make a big difference. By the start of the next decade, state renewable

energy programs will contribute 8% of our downward shift in national carbon pollution since 2007, and by the start of the next decade, new clean energy programs could move us closer to our national climate goals while creating new jobs and expanding energy diversity.<sup>1</sup>

**2 Technologies and practices that save energy and make our homes and businesses work better.** Demand-side management programs in place in over 40 states<sup>3</sup> help us cut monthly energy bills, and virtually every state supports energy savings through a host of public-private partnerships and other assistance programs. By 2020, current efficiency programs are expected to contribute 21% of the downward shift in national carbon pollution since 2007. By 2020, efficiency and process improvements could be expanded to cut 300 million tons of carbon per year, and by 2030 create over 13 million new jobs and \$500 million of new economic growth.<sup>1</sup>



# Climate Change

- 3 **Smarter and friendlier transportation systems that save time, money, energy, land and, most importantly, lives.** In 2013, our cars will have 16% better fuel economy<sup>4</sup> than just six years ago, and vehicle miles travelled rates declined for the first time. By 2020, current transportation efficiency and fuels programs across the United States are expected to contribute 17% of the downward shift in national carbon pollution since 2007. By 2020, the expansion of these programs could save \$70 million, add 370,000 jobs, and \$37 million of economic growth each year.<sup>1</sup>
- 4 **Strategies to capture energy from waste, and stop waste before it starts.** Nationally, integrated waste programs, for instance, could add about 1.5 million jobs and \$100 billion in economic growth by 2030.<sup>1</sup>
- 5 **Programs to conserve forests and farms and manage them with cutting edge science for harmonious production of food, fiber, water, energy, and a whole community of life.** A decade ago, the United States was on track to lose as much forestland in the next generation as it has since our first independence day 200 years ago.<sup>5</sup> This rate has slowed, but much work remains. By continuing to conserve our urban and rural forests by 2030, we could create 3 million new jobs and more than \$80 billion of economic growth while protecting this vital carbon reserve.<sup>1</sup>

Over the years, we learned how to generate and integrate many actions like these through comprehensive plans with road maps for every economic sector and level of government. More than 30 states developed comprehensive climate plans in the past decade that resulted in a call to action for our local, state, and national leaders. Thousands of stakeholders volunteered hundreds of thousands of hours through these initiatives to find real solutions to real issues.

In the process, we learned how to raise money while we decarbonize our economy. Nine states in

the Northeast, including Maryland, and seven states in the West, including California<sup>6</sup> have entered regional cap-and-trade programs. The northeastern states and California now auction valuable carbon permits that raised \$125 Million<sup>7</sup> and \$284 Million<sup>8</sup> in auctions during 2012 and 2013. These proceeds have been vital to local communities and quality of life by reinvesting revenues into support services, such as health and education, as well as energy improvements such efficiency and diversity.

## Emerging Global Clean Economy

And we learned that smart actions could lead us to a pot of gold. Take a look at the emerging global clean economy.

Last year, Governor Brown of California, Governor Kitzhaber of Oregon, Governor Gregoire of Washington, and Premier Clark of British Columbia took a very new look at climate change. They found that some of the highest growth world markets are driven by energy and environmental security and sustainability. This emerging global clean economy is estimated at \$2.3 trillion per year<sup>9</sup> by the start of the next decade, and growing.

But they also found that this global race could easily pass them by. So they penned a report to show how to capture and enhance these new markets through policy actions at home to ensure that global markets would create local jobs and investment. This is the new world of market readiness. It's the alternative to the race for what's left; it's the race for what's best.

Comprehensive approaches to climate, energy, and economic growth could put states and cities in the lead in this race.

While it may not look like Congress noticed all of this, consider the passage of the Energy Independence and Security Act of 2007, estimated to contribute 4% to the downward shift in national carbon pollution since that time;<sup>1</sup> the American Recovery Act that provided historic investments in energy efficiency and renewable energy; and many other targeted measures within our economic

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sectors. The President's Climate Action Plan announced in June reflects the same comprehensive approach of states, and measures similar to those crafted by stakeholders.

Neither should be a surprise given the bottom-up nature of our nation's approach to law and policy.

It's also important to know that the world has noticed actions here in the United States.

In 2007, Arizona Governor Napolitano forged a cross-border agreement with Governor Castelo of Sonora, Mexico to help him create his region's first state climate action plan. Five other Border States of Mexico followed quickly. In a few short years, Mexico passed North America's first national climate change law. Among other things, it incorporates state plans as a mechanism to meet national goals.

Mexico's state and national climate action plans are now part of a worldwide template sponsored by USAID and known as the Low Emissions Development Strategy.<sup>10</sup> It is unfolding in Bangladesh, Colombia, Costa Rica, Gabon, Kenya, Philippines, Mexico, Ukraine, and Vietnam for a start. It is part of a broader trend toward comprehensive, multi-objective approaches to climate change. You will hear this called many things in many places, from green growth, to clean growth, to secure and sustainable growth, to comprehensive climate action planning.

In China, this concept is called low-carbon development. In 2011, the Peoples Congress of China passed its 12th Five Year Plan,<sup>11</sup> including numeric goals for greenhouse gas reduction, economic

growth, and energy intensity for every governor in every province. With our help at The Center for Climate Strategies and state leaders in the United States, they are now developing a low-carbon development system similar to U.S. state climate plans.

What a great story that China is turning to the power of its provinces and governors to move ahead—and that the United States and China are on parallel tracks in such an important area.

Years ago, I served as congressional liaison to the White House Climate Change Task Force. I remember standing in Kyoto, Japan in 1997 with our congressional delegation as our chief negotiator broke the news on the President's proposed emissions reduction targets. They would have bound the United States to reach 1990 carbon levels by 2020. At the time, many of us could not imagine closing this gap much less the bigger ones ahead.

The questions from both aisles of congress in that meeting were instantaneous: where would the carbon pollution reductions come from, and what would the folks back home have to do? To be honest, we did not have a very specific answer. Fast forward to today, and we can answer these questions with confidence because so many have done so much.

We have come a long way. Every one of the good things that changed our world started because one person did one thing, in one place, and we gave them room to grow. If we continue to act, we'll continue to see results that add up fast. **em**

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