



## 2021 Issue Paper: Climate Change

### Position Statement

The League of Women Voters of the United States believes that “climate change is a serious threat facing our nation and our planet. The League believes that an interrelated approach to combating climate change—including through energy conservation, air pollution controls, building resilience, and promotion of renewable resources—is necessary to protect public health and defend the overall integrity of the global ecosystem. The League supports climate goals and policies consistent with the best available climate science and that will ensure a stable climate system for future generations. Individuals, communities, and governments must continue to address this issue, while considering the ramifications of their decision at all levels—local, state, regional, national, and global.” Effectively addressing climate change will require action at all these levels.

In Washington State, climate change is having a significant effect on our natural and economic landscape, which is affecting public health. Climate change is bringing significant changes to Washington State’s natural and economic landscape:

- Ocean warming affects marine life, including salmon survival
- Rising sea levels threaten shorelines and cities
- Ocean acidification affects marine life and the shellfish industry
- Extreme weather events, including flooding and drought, affect riparian habitats (water-land edges), agriculture, and wildfires
- Receding glaciers affect summer water levels and temperatures in salmon-bearing rivers
- Earlier snow melt affects the hydrology of rivers—it erodes banks, disrupts salmon habitats in riverbeds, and leads to less rain in the summer
- Declining air quality affects public health due to smoke during the fire season over the past few years.

During the 2019-2020 sessions, the legislature passed significant climate legislation:

- Enacting the Clean Energy Transformation Act (CETA)
- Establishing clean building standards
- Reducing greenhouse gas emissions from hydrofluorocarbons
- Supporting electric vehicles and alternative fuels
- Increasing appliance efficiency standards
- Improving fairness in solar electricity net metering
- Amending greenhouse gas emission limits for consistency with recent climate science
- Establishing the sustainable farms and fields grant program
- Reducing emissions by improving the clean car standards and clean car program

- Creating a public-private partnership for financing energy efficiency retrofits and new construction

The Department of Commerce is currently updating the [State Energy Strategy for 2021](#) to comply with CETA to reach 100% clean electricity by 2045.

### **Opportunities for the 2021 Legislative Session and Beyond**

This session, we expect the legislature will focus primarily on recovering from the COVID-19 pandemic and resulting economic challenges, so will lack the time for as much emphasis on climate change as in recent years. Current indications suggest that importance on a clean fuels bill and preserving funding will continue. The LWVWA supports measures to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, put a price on carbon, and enact measures to promote climate resiliency.

Goals and opportunities remaining for future sessions include:

- A clean fuel standard to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in transportation
- A carbon cap and trade program or other price on carbon acceptable to legislators and voters
- An update to the Growth Management Act to include climate change mitigation and adaptation

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