

Environment & Energy

D.C. Council Advances Accelerated Building Electrification Bill

By Zach Bright

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- Measure would require enhanced energy standards
 - New, renovated government buildings would be affected
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The Council of the District of Columbia unanimously passed legislation on Tuesday that would fast-track net-zero energy standards for all newly constructed and substantially renovated government buildings in Washington, D.C.

The Greener Government Buildings Act would require such buildings owned or financed by Washington, D.C., to abide by standards that maximize on-site renewable energy generation, boost their energy efficiency, and use alternatives to fossil fuel heating like electric heat pumps.

The measure, which would enter effect immediately, awaits Mayor Muriel Bowser's signature and subsequent approval from Congress, which reviews all District of Columbia legislation before it can become law.

"The District of Columbia has some of the strongest climate commitments in the country, and we need bold action to ensure we meet D.C.'s commitment to phase out fossil fuel combustion by 2045," said Mark Rodeffer, co-chair of the Sierra Club D.C. chapter.

Washington, D.C., has a mandate to achieve total carbon neutrality by 2050. Buildings are the city's largest source of greenhouse emissions, making up 72% of greenhouse gas emissions according to 2020 numbers from the D.C. Department of Energy and Environment.

The measure also would fund training to develop a construction workforce of builders, contractors, architects, and engineers who know how to build net-zero buildings.

"This is important because one of the pinch points for doing this transition that we all need to do—government and private sector and homes—is knowing how to do this construction and knowing how to maintain these these buildings," said Barbara Briggs, an advocate with the faith-based climate group Interfaith Power & Light.

It exceeds a measure the D.C. Council passed in the summer that requires all newly constructed and substantially renovated buildings to be net-zero by 2026.

The Sierra Club has received funding from Bloomberg Philanthropies, the charitable organization founded by Michael Bloomberg. Bloomberg Law is operated by entities controlled by Michael Bloomberg.

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