

Environment & Energy

Fossil Fuel Use Restricted in Climate Laws Signed by D.C. Mayor

By Zach Bright

Aug. 1, 2022, 4:56 PM

Stronger emissions targets and buildings codes with fossil fuel limits for the nation's capital await congressional approval after Washington, D.C., Mayor Muriel Bowser signed what one advocate called "critical" climate legislation.

Once those acts are approved and detailed monitoring required by the Climate Commitment Amendment Act and Clean Energy DC Building Code Amendment Act begins, environmental advocates aim to advance more specific policies—such as transitioning moderate- and low-income residences off of natural gas—to lower greenhouse gas emissions.

The climate act would end District of Columbia government purchases of fossil-fuel-powered equipment to heat buildings by 2025 and only allow it to purchase zero-emissions vehicles starting in 2026. It also would enshrine a carbon neutrality target by 2045 as law and accelerate the District of Columbia's former carbon neutrality goal by five years.

"This legislation really takes D.C. forward, and I'm pretty sure it's pretty far in the vanguard in terms of what's happening around the country," said Lara Levison, chair of the Sierra Club D.C. Chapter's Clean Energy Committee.

The building code legislation would require that new buildings by 2026 must produce their energy on-site from renewable sources and would explicitly restrict the use of emissions-generating energy, namely fossil fuels.

Congress reviews all District of Columbia legislation before it can become law.

Buildings generated more than 70% of greenhouse gas emissions, according to 2019 numbers from the D.C. Department of Energy and Environment.

Both measures—signed July 27—build on the Clean Energy Omnibus Amendment Act of 2018, which requires D.C. to source 100% of its electricity from renewable sources by 2032.

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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