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Environment & Energy

# Newsom Scores Climate Agenda Wins as Legislature Wraps (2)

By Zach Bright

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- Governor pushed batch of climate bills in recent weeks
  - Several priority measures on his desk as session ends
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Bills requiring California to boost renewable energy production and further reduce greenhouse gas emissions were among a flurry of environmental measures state lawmakers sent to Gov. Gavin Newsom at Wednesday night's deadline.

Newsom (D) aimed to set in stone a legacy on climate change beyond executive action in an under-the-wire legislative push that largely met his goal, with just one measure in the climate package unable to advance. The governor is seen as building a portfolio for his re-election run in November and a possible presidential one.

His renewed support on climate broke long-lasting logjams on bills that he'd taken on as his priorities.

"Together with the Legislature's leadership, the progress we make on the climate crisis this year will be felt for generations—and the impact will spread far beyond our borders," Newsom said in a statement.

Environmental advocates and some Democratic legislators have welcomed the shift and newfound success.

"It's verifiable that S.B. 100 in 2018 was the last big climate bill that California passed," said Mary Creasman, CEO of California Environmental Voters. "It's really wonderful to have executive actions and I don't want to downplay it because as the climate crisis gets worse, we need all tools at our disposal. But the Legislature has to pass policies."

**Governor's Wins**

Newsom's support appears to be paying dividends. Priority items on carbon neutrality, clean electricity, drilling limits, and carbon capture and sequestration are headed to the governor.

California would set a goal to become carbon neutral by 2045, codifying an executive order from former Gov. Jerry Brown (D), if A.B. 1279 is signed. A similar bill with the same goal failed in 2021, with little intervention from the governor then.

The state would have to generate 90% of electricity from renewables by 2035 and 100% by 2045 if S.B. 1020 is signed. State agencies also would have to source electricity from 100% renewable sources by 2035.

And new oil and gas wells would have to be built at least 3,200 feet away from schools and homes if S.B. 1137 becomes law. It aims to limit pollution that contributes to what Sen. Lena Gonzalez (D)—who introduced the bill—called a “public health crisis.”

Like the carbon neutral target, two versions of S.B. 1137 failed in 2020 and 2021 due to intense industry opposition, when Newsom chose to stay above the legislative fray. This year's measure passed 25-10 in the Senate and 46-24 in the Assembly.

The state would also create a carbon capture framework if S.B. 905 is signed, with the California Air Resources Board developing environmental standards and a streamlined permitting process for projects. Natural carbon sequestration would be boosted by A.B. 1757, if signed.

Another measure, S.B. 1314, would prohibit carbon capture technologies used to continue fossil fuel use and ban enhanced oil recovery—an oil extraction method that uses carbon dioxide and water.

One measure in Newsom's climate plank was unable to advance at Wednesday's deadline. The state's greenhouse gas reduction goals would have accelerated under A.B. 2133, which aimed to require the California Air Resources Board to create a pathway to lower emissions by 55% in 2030. The bill was unable to gain the necessary votes for passage.

### **More Measures**

A host of other environmental bills made it to Newsom's desk on Wednesday and await his signature.

California Environmental Quality Act reviews—the state's National Environmental Protection Act counterpart—would be streamlined for universities to build housing under S.B. 886 and expedited for certain emissions reduction projects under S.B. 1136.

Community renewable energy programs for renting and low-income Californians would be supported by A.B. 2316. Green hydrogen's possible future as a renewable energy source would receive a boost under S.B. 1075.

For transportation, electric vehicle charging infrastructure would be required for multifamily residences under S.B. 1482. Another bill, S.B. 1010 would accelerates the state fleet's transition to zero-emission vehicles.

The State Water Resources Control Board and California's nine regional water boards would each have to seat at least one environmental justice or tribal member under A.B. 2108. And a water rate affordability program to help low-income Californians would be established under S.B. 222.

A.B. 2247 would require manufacturers to report products sold in or brought to California containing per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances. Silicon Valley companies including Alphabet Inc. , Apple Inc., and Microsoft Corp. opposed the bill, which would provide a wealth of new data for California and the EPA.

Exposure to PFAS—found everywhere from cookware to carpets—is linked to human health issues, according to the Environmental Protection Agency.

Seabed mining would be prohibited by stripping lease-granting authorities from the State Lands Commission under A.B. 1832.

(Updated with status for all bills following conclusion of the Legislature's session.)

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