

Major Employers and Energy Consumers Urge Legislators to Maintain Virginia's Clean Energy and Transportation Ambitions

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As a new legislative session begins in Richmond and the Youngkin administration takes office, several major companies and institutions with operations in Virginia are urging state lawmakers to maintain and build upon the considerable progress made in recent years to confront the climate crisis.

In a **letter to members of the Virginia General Assembly**, companies **Hannon Armstrong, Lutron, Mars, Inc., Nestlé, Unilever, Workday, and Worthen Industries** and higher-ed institutions **Sweet Briar College, University of Lynchburg, Virginia Foundation for Independent Colleges, and Virginia Wesleyan University** thanked lawmakers for passing several key pieces of legislation in 2020 and 2021 designed to reduce pollution while growing a robust clean-energy economy and protecting Virginians from the effects of climate change.

“In the coming years, we hope Virginia will continue to provide a hospitable environment for clean energy and transportation investments and, in turn, remain on track in its pursuit of a prosperous low-carbon economy,” the companies and institutions wrote in the letter.

This letter follows years of advocacy from leading companies that have supported the Commonwealth’s efforts to reduce climate pollution across the economy, citing significant business benefits to clean energy and transportation policies, including lower energy costs, new in-state investments, and programs that will help them meet their own corporate climate goals.

In 2020, several large companies, including **Akamai, Nestlé, Mars, IKEA, Kaiser Permanente, Schneider Electric, Unilever, and Worthen Industries, championed** the landmark Virginia Clean Economy Act (VCEA), which established Virginia as a climate leader, pledging to effectively eliminate greenhouse gas emissions by 2045 and source 100% of electricity from clean sources by 2050.

In 2020, Virginia also joined the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI), a successful, multi-state cap-and-trade program in the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic that has helped participating states reduce carbon pollution while growing the region's economy and investing in climate solutions. Nearly two dozen companies, institutions, and municipalities **celebrated** Virginia's participation in the program, writing to thank former Gov. Ralph Northam and the General Assembly for joining.

In 2021, companies such as **DHL, Lime, Lyft, and Uber encouraged** Virginia lawmakers to build on the momentum of the VCEA by approving new clean car rules that require automakers in the state to sell cars with stronger emission standards than federal policy demands.

"The climate crisis is both a business threat and an economic opportunity for the Commonwealth of Virginia," said **Anne Kelly, vice president of government relations at Ceres**, a sustainability nonprofit that organized the letter. "Virginia has become a regional leader in efforts to cut carbon pollution while building out the clean-energy economy of the future, but there is still so much work to do to meet the state's climate goals. Companies know this is no time for policymakers to slow down or backtrack, and that's why they are urging the General Assembly to continue building on the Commonwealth's climate accomplishments this legislative session."

"Sweet Briar College is deeply committed to the sustainable future for the Commonwealth and beyond, and supports the General Assembly's effort with regards to climate change," said **President Meredith Woo from Sweet Briar College, one of the higher institutions on the letter.**

Virginia legal experts say only the General Assembly can take action to withdraw from RGGI. To date, Virginia's funds from the program have been used to expand low-income energy efficiency programs and address coastal flooding, which Gov. Glenn Youngkin has cited as a major climate challenge.

About Ceres

Ceres is a nonprofit organization working with the most influential capital market leaders to solve the world's greatest sustainability challenges. Through our powerful networks and global collaborations of investors, companies and nonprofits, we drive action and

inspire equitable market-based and policy solutions throughout the economy to build a just and sustainable future. For more information, visit ceres.org and follow @CeresNews.

Media Contact: Helen Booth-Tobin, booth-tobin@ceres.org, 617-247-0700 ext. 214

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