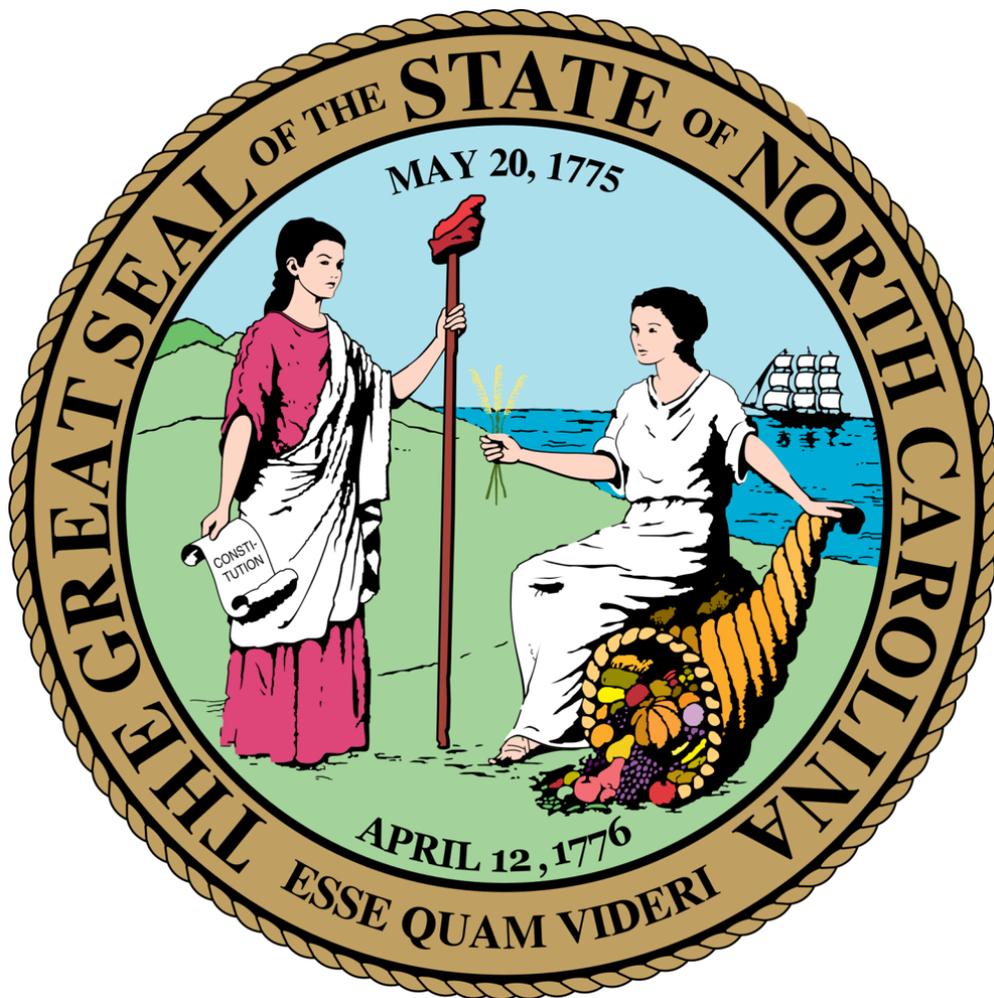


https://www.wataugademocrat.com/news/gov-cooper-signs-new-energy-bill-calling-for-carbon-reductions/article_935aaf73-4249-5c33-913c-f9fa6a88811a.html

Gov. Cooper signs new energy bill calling for carbon reductions

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Oct 20, 2021



RALEIGH — Gov. Roy Cooper has signed a new bipartisan energy measure aiming to reduce North Carolina’s greenhouse gas emissions in the coming decades.



House Bill 951 – signed into law on Oct. 13 – requires the North Carolina Utilities Commission to take the steps needed to achieve the goal of reducing energy producers’ carbon dioxide emissions by 70 percent by 2030 and to reach carbon neutrality by 2050.

According to Cooper, 15 other states have already signed similar carbon reduction legislation and before North Carolina signed HB 951, Virginia was the only state in the southeast to have this kind of legislation.



In an Oct. 13 press conference, Cooper stated that the Utilities Commission has been instructed to create plans by the end of 2022 to meet the carbon dioxide reduction goals. However, he said that this plan “Must be reviewed every two years to consider rapidly evolving and low cost technology.” Additionally, the Utilities Commission is tasked with finding the most cost efficient means of reaching the set goals.

“North Carolina is working to reduce the effect of climate change on marginalized populations while putting our state at the forefront of the clean energy economy and the jobs that it brings,” Cooper said.

To achieve these goals, Cooper said that coal-fired power plants, such as those owned by the state’s dominant energy company Duke Energy, will be retired early while the state works to bolster its already growing renewable energy sector. Duke



Energy, other energy companies, advocacy groups and stakeholders will have input into the Utilities Commission's plans, according to Cooper.

The new law allows Duke Energy to seek multiyear rate increases rather than year-by-year approval for those increases, a measure the company has sought in the past. It also lets utilities receive incentives based on meeting the goals set by the Utilities Commission and includes means to reduce the financial impact on a company if it must close a coal-fired power plant earlier than planned.

While Duke Energy does not directly serve much of the High Country, many local energy providers, such as Blue Ridge Energy, purchase energy off of the grid from Duke Energy. Locally, the town of Boone has already been working with providers to increase access to renewable energy for residents.

The town has set a goal for its municipal operations to be climate neutral by 2030 and have them using 100 percent renewable energy by 2040. This goal is likely to be achieved before 2040 since the town has brokered a deal with New River Light and Power to supply hydroelectric power that will cover 25 percent of municipal operations starting Jan. 1, 2022 and is currently negotiating increasing renewables with Blue Ridge Energy.

Marisa Mecke is a Report for America corps member for Mountain Times Publications. Report for America is a national nonprofit service program which places journalists in local newsrooms to report on undercovered issues.

