

National Caucus of Environmental Legislators

2019 Annual Report



A Message From NCEL President

I am honored to write to you as the newly elected President of NCEL. Your passion for the environment and commitment to a healthier world inspires me, and together with the NCEL staff and board of directors, I am grateful for the opportunity to serve and work with legislators across the country to protect, conserve, and restore our environment.

As a former Alaska state legislator and minority leader, I joined NCEL 10 years ago and was grateful for how NCEL connected me with other environmental champions. At that time, NCEL was a start-up with one full-time employee. Today, NCEL has grown into a powerhouse organization with a staff of seven that empowers over 1,200 environmental state legislators across the country.

In 2019, state after state advanced policies to combat climate change, stop plastic pollution from our entering our oceans and rivers, preserve wildlife and public lands, and protect communities from toxic chemicals. NCEL supported these accomplishments by connecting legislators as a community and by providing our members with crucial information when we needed it most.

As we head into 2020, my colleagues across the country are not backing away from protecting public health and our environment. I'm excited to build on our members' victories from this year and to see all the work that we can accomplish together next year. Thank you for your hard work and support!



Beth Kerttula
Former Alaska House Minority Leader
NCEL President

A Message from the Executive Director

The NCEL staff are privileged to serve state environmental champions across the country. We feel fulfilled knowing that our work allows legislators to be more responsive and make a greater impact on the environmental quality in their constituent's daily lives.

A shifted state legislative landscape in 2019 created new opportunities for advancing an environmental agenda, and NCEL and its members were ready to take action. With assistance from NCEL staff, legislators made great strides toward a world with clean water for all, an end to pollution, protections for wildlife and public lands, and a future powered 100% by renewable energy.

Throughout the year, NCEL staff convened and connected legislators to their peers across the country, organized them at national and regional meetings, and provided them with personalized assistance ensuring they were able to accomplish their environmental legislative goals.

NCEL is poised to continue to grow its impact as states take an ever more important role in protecting and preserving the environment. The NCEL staff is eager to help state legislators continue to raise the bar on environmental action in 2020 and beyond. Thank you for your continued support!



Jeff Mauk
Executive Director

How We Work

About:

The National Caucus of Environmental Legislators empowers a nonpartisan network of legislative champions to protect, conserve, and improve the natural and human environment.

We believe that the key to advancing sound policy in the states is well-informed legislatures with strong champions who can advocate on behalf of the environment, develop shared strategies, and collaborate with their peers across the country on shared learning and action.

NCEL does not lobby for the enactment or defeat of any state or federal legislation.

How We Work



Research - Provide facts, resources, and connect legislators with scientific research on current environmental issues.



Educate - Connect legislators to leading experts and their legislative colleagues to stay informed about environmental issues.



Convene - Founded by and for state legislators, we bring together legislators within states, regions, & across the country.



Empower - Foster collaboration across state lines to promote multi-state learning and action.

NCEL Board and Staff

NCEL BOARD OF DIRECTORS

The Honorable Beth Kerttula
Former State Representative, Alaska
President

The Honorable Chris Lee
State Representative, Hawaii
Vice President

The Honorable Brian Kavanagh
State Senator, New York
Secretary

J.R. Tolbert
VP State Policy, Advanced Energy Economy
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The Honorable Pricey Harrison
State Representative, North Carolina

The Honorable Melissa Hortman
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The Honorable Chuck McGrady
State Representative, North Carolina

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State Senator, Georgia

The Honorable Chris Rabb
State Representative, Pennsylvania

The Honorable Holly Raschein
State Representative, Florida

The Honorable Henry Stern
State Senator, California

Brooke Smith
Director of Public Engagement
The Kavil Foundation

The Honorable James Hubbard
Former State Delegate, Maryland
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Climate & Energy

Overview

In the past year, states have pushed back against federal efforts to expand fossil fuel extraction, and enacted proactive, innovative policies to address climate change.

Carbon Pricing - Momentum continues to grow each year around state efforts to price carbon emissions. The 2019 legislative session saw 44 bills introduced in 17 states, compared to 33 bills in 13 states in 2018. This year, all eyes turned to the regional cap-and-invest proposal taking shape by the regional Transportation and Climate Initiative. NCEL convenes the Carbon Costs Coalition of state legislators dedicated to reducing carbon emissions through market mechanisms.

Offshore Drilling - In January, legislators from nine states announced a united effort to protect their coasts from expanded offshore drilling, a key goal of the Trump Administration. During the 2019 session, 11 states introduced bills, and four passed bills, that would ban or restrict expanding offshore drilling and related infrastructure in state waters, effectively blocking such activity in federal waters as well.

Clean Energy - In 2015, Hawai'i became the first state to pass a law setting their renewable energy goal at 100% by 2045. The costs of renewables are decreasing rapidly and in some areas is already competitive with conventional power from fossil fuels. With the decline in costs, the idea of going 100% renewable is gaining momentum throughout the country.



Carbon Pricing

- NCEL convened quarterly meetings and expanded the Carbon Costs Coalition.
- Forty-four carbon pricing bills introduced in 17 states.
- Oregon's HB2020 passed the state House of Representatives.



Offshore Drilling

- Press announcement of nine states.
- NCEL assisted legislators in 11 states.
- Four states passed offshore drilling legislation -- Maine, New Hampshire, New York, and Oregon



100% RPS

- Six states passed legislation setting goals of 100% clean energy.
- Three states passed securitization bills that support programs for a just transition to clean energy.
- NCEL convened legislators in the Southwest to promote regional collaboration.

Conservation

Overview

Wildlife, habitat, and natural landscapes everywhere are increasingly threatened by human activity and climate change. NCEL equips legislators with resources and knowledge to advance effective policies that conserve these vital resources and promote outdoor recreation to enjoy these landscapes.

Wildlife Connectivity - Wildlife corridors and crossings are a vital and cost-effective way to maintain resilient landscapes for fish and wildlife, to protect biodiversity, and to provide outdoor recreation opportunities. Crossings can take the form of highway and road overpasses, underpasses, or culverts, which provide a safe crossing for animals and recreation. Corridors are large areas of undeveloped habitat that connect isolated habitat and allow for ecosystem and genetic connectivity for plants and animals.

Pollinators - States continue to make strides towards protecting pollinators. Minnesota passed numerous pollinator protections including a popular grant program to encourage pollinator-friendly yards, named the “Lawns to Legumes” program. Many other states, such as Pennsylvania and New Mexico also introduced and passed policies protecting pollinators. States are leading a national movement to limit the use of neonicotinoids which have been shown to cause bees to struggle with simple navigation and experience reduced growth rates.

Outdoor Recreation - The benefits of time outside are becoming more and more apparent. Studies have shown a connection between access to nature and positive health outcomes. Two of the major policy areas states pursued include establishing offices of outdoor recreation and encouraging outdoor recreation through grant programs.



Wildlife Corridors

- Eleven states considered legislation this year to promote connectivity.
- Four states passed legislation to study and promote corridors.
- State actions inspired Congress to introduce the Wildlife Corridors Conservation Act.



Pollinators

- Seven states passed legislation advancing pollinator protection.
- Ten states considered legislation to restrict neonicotinoids - VT and HI passed their bills.
- Minnesota passed the first “Lawns to Legumes” program that other states are starting to duplicate.



Outdoor Recreation

- NCEL and partners published the [Youth Outdoor Policy Playbook website](#).
- New Mexico created an Office of Outdoor Recreation with the nation’s first Outdoor Recreation Equity Fund.
- Minnesota and Nevada passed youth outdoor recreation grant programs.

Environmental Health

Overview

The past year saw a leap in awareness of the dangers of chemical and plastic pollution in the environment. Plastic pollution is becoming a growing threat to wildlife and human health. The prevalence of per- and polyfluoroalkyl (PFAS) chemicals, linked to cancer and other ailments, has spurred action at every level of government. States along the Mississippi River corridor experienced historical flooding and continued issues with nutrient pollution.

Plastic Pollution - This year saw an exponential increase in legislation to reduce plastic pollution. Public awareness of the issue spiked dramatically in 2018, and this new-found public concern was evident by the number of bills introduced. There were more than 220 bills introduced in 37 states aimed at tackling plastic pollution, from banning specific uses to more comprehensive approaches.

Mississippi River Legislative Caucus - The Mississippi River Legislative Caucus (MRLC) is designed to assist legislators representing river districts and their colleagues who are committed to a thriving, healthy Mississippi River. The goal is to build the capacity of legislators in river districts to more effectively address river health and water quality issues and to create a forum for collaboration on growing communities and local economies.

Toxic Chemicals - State action on toxic chemicals ranges from efforts to ban flame retardants to addressing concerns over PFAS, also known as “forever chemicals.” Concern, awareness, and action on PFAS chemicals continue to grow each year. While flame retardants were created to help reduce the risk and spread of fires, they have been found to be ineffective but harmful to human health.



Plastics

- Two states passed legislation to ban polystyrene (styrofoam).
- Four states passed legislation to ban plastic bags.
- Vermont passed the nation’s most comprehensive single-use ban on straws, single-use bags, and polystyrene.



MRLC

- Organized Mississippi River tour - seven events in six cities with nearly 60 attendees.
- Hosted 3rd Annual MRLC Meeting - 23 attendees from seven states.
- Established a dedicated MRLC website - mrlc.net.



Toxic Chemicals

- NCEL hosted a PFAS webinar with 20 attendees from 15 states.
- Twenty-five states introduced PFAS bills and nine states passed legislation.
- Legislators convened in the Northeast to develop a more regional, holistic approach to toxics and plastics in the environment.

NCEL In The News

In 2019, NCEL received 248 media mentions and was featured in outlets across the country. Here are some of our press highlights:

State lawmakers join forces against offshore drilling



Coastal states link arms to oppose Trump offshore drilling ban



Earth Day challenge for gardeners: don't poison bees



Democrat-controlled statehouses endorsing clean energy



Maine is banning styrofoam & it's the first state to take the leap



Lawmakers touring Nahant Marsh are told wetlands can be part of flood solution



In challenge to Trump, Oregon votes to cap climate emissions



Plastic bans: what you need to know



US state legislatures seek climate action despite Trump pullback



How can we get plastic waste under control?



Sounding an alarm about the health of the Mississippi River



State officials vow to fight Trump plan



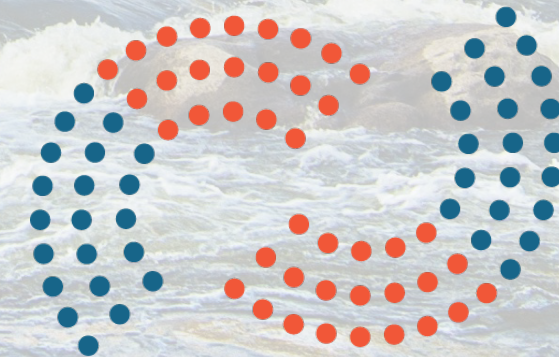
NCEL By The Numbers

1,200+
NCEL participants

7
full-time employees

4
Senior Advisors

248
news mentions



25
states visited

110 +
individual meetings with legislators

7
forums hosted

152
attendees at the National Forum

State Legislators From Across the Country Convene for Bold Action on the Environment

From August 2-4, 152 state legislators from 39 states convened for NCEL's 2019 National Forum. Considered by attendees to be the "gold standard" of legislator gatherings, the event provides state lawmakers the opportunity to collaborate on policy solutions related to climate, energy, conservation, and environmental health.

This year's National Forum focused on ensuring a healthy environment for all. The opening session emphasized building an inclusive environmental movement by working with community voices, such as frontline communities and labor, to develop just and equitable policy solutions. Panelists reminded attendees that addressing the environmental challenges of our time requires engaging the groups and communities most impacted by those challenges.

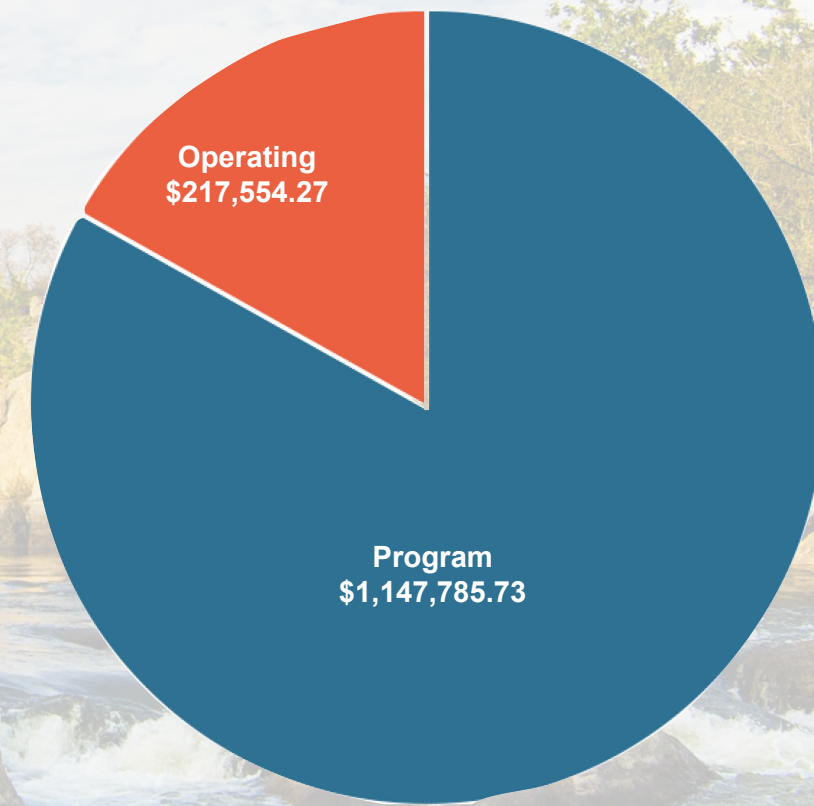
The Reverend Dr. Gerald Durley, chair of Interfaith Power and Light, provided a keynote address on how these issues intersect. Rev. Dr. Durley, who is a legendary civil rights leader and environmental champion, emphasized the need for everyone to come together around our climate crisis and drew on comparisons from his experiences in the civil rights movement.

Other session topics included plastic pollution, toxic chemicals, outdoor engagement, transitioning to a carbon-free economy, saving natural systems, and much more.





NCEL Executive Director Jeff Mauk notes that states passed a number of precedent-setting bills in 2019 and that there is room for continued growth and progress in 2020.

"This year saw many states working towards 100% clean energy, legislation aimed at reducing plastic waste, and a growing momentum around addressing toxic chemicals," said Mauk. "States have the ability to take meaningful action and ensure a healthy environment for all. By having legislators share successful strategies and collaborate with their colleagues from across the country, we believe that 2020 will be another successful year for environmental legislation in the states."

Visit ncel.net/2019forum for a full recap, short video, and photos.



Ways You Can Help Empower Environmental Champions

-  Become a monthly sustaining member. By donating monthly, you give NCEL the confidence to plan for the future.
-  Shop using Amazon Smile.
-  Tell us how NCEL has helped you.
-  Follow NCEL on social media for the latest news in state environmental policy.

For more information on donating to NCEL visit ncel.net/donate or contact Jeff Mauk at 202-744-1006 or jmauk@ncel.net.



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