

National Caucus of Environmental Legislators

2017 Annual Report





MESSAGE FROM PRICEY HARRISON NCEL PRESIDENT AND BOARD CHAIR

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Dear Friend,

States have always been leaders in protecting the health of our constituents and the environment. In the past two decades, state legislators have led the country on landmark environmental policies, such as clean car standards, comprehensive toxics reform, renewable energy standards, banning microbeads in waterways, and so many more issues.

Throughout 2017, the federal government shocked the country by backing away from its responsibilities to protect its constituents. However, states stepped up to fill that void. When the EPA halted regulations on cancer-causing chemicals, states like Rhode Island and Maine passed bans on harmful flame retardants. When President Trump made the U.S. the only country to withdraw from the Paris Agreement, states like Massachusetts introduced a bill to abide, and over 550 NCEL participants pledged to lead on climate action. As the Clean Power Plan was shelved, states enhanced their renewable energy standards, reduced barriers for solar installations, and redoubled their efforts to put a price on carbon pollution. Fortunately, NCEL was there to allow environmental state legislators to work together across the aisle and across the country to act as a united front, and to gain inspiration from our peers through this invaluable network.

In this report, you will learn about the progress made throughout the year as well as the work lined up for the year to come. Your support has put NCEL in a strong position to empower state environmental leaders across the country.

On behalf of our more than 1000 NCEL participants from across the United States, I want to thank you for all you do to care for the environment and make it possible for this powerful network to exist.



Representative Pricey Harrison
NCEL President and Board Chair



MESSAGE FROM JEFF MAUK NCEL EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

NCEL STAFF



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Jane Krentz
Midwest Regional Coordinator



Ruth Musgrave
Conservation Coordinator

Dear Friend,

States are not only the laboratories of democracy, they are also the front lines in protecting citizens from threats like climate change and air and water pollution. That means that state legislators face a monumental task. They often have limited or no dedicated staff to conduct research on issues and policies; industry groups spend millions of dollars spreading misinformation and have increased their focus on the states; and most legislators are part-time, balancing policymaking, constituent services, and the other jobs they maintain so they are able to serve the public.

This is what makes NCEL so important. By connecting legislators to their peers, organizing them at national and regional meetings, and providing them with draft language, messaging, research, and other personalized assistance, we empower our members to be stronger leaders on the issues that matter most.

NCEL was founded in 1996 by then-Maryland Delegate Leon Billings, who had previously been the chief U.S. Senate staffer responsible for writing the Clean Water Act and the Clean Air Act. Since then, NCEL has been instrumental in adoption of the Great Lakes Compact, over 30 states adopting California's Clean Car standard, several victories in state and federal toxics regulation reform, and a wave of state bills banning microbeads that pushed Congress to act on the issue in late 2015.

Caucus participants have made great progress and won some key victories throughout 2017 as a result of learning about emerging issues and inspiring each other through the NCEL network. Facing inaction from Washington, DC, states are more empowered than ever to push forward progressive environmental policies. I want to thank you for your continued support and look forward to what we can accomplish together in 2018 and beyond.



Jeff Mauk
NCEL Executive Director



The National Caucus of Environmental Legislators

About NCEL

WHO WE ARE

The National Caucus of Environmental Legislators (NCEL) is a network of more than 1,000 state legislators from all 50 states and both parties that connects and empowers state legislators working to enact a proactive environmental agenda and defend against well-funded polluting interests.

Who We Are



>1,000 STATE
LAWMAKERS



ALL 50 STATES +
ONTARIO



BY AND FOR
STATE LEGISLATORS

MISSION

The mission of NCEL is to empower environmentally progressive state lawmakers by: sharing ideas and information on environmental issues, legislative initiatives, and regulatory actions; assisting each other on proactive initiatives; sharing information on efforts to weaken existing laws or enact anti-environment proposals; and providing information on federal actions which might affect state environmental programs or initiatives or otherwise affect environmental protection.

BELIEF

We believe that state legislators are more likely to advance pro-environmental policies when they are connected to a nationwide network of peers that share their values, have their capacity increased through access to remote environmental staff, and can move policies simultaneously and with a shared strategy with fellow legislators across the country.

HOW WE OPERATE

By working together and sharing information, NCEL members become more effective at promoting environmental policies within their states and raise a powerful collective voice to drive federal action. NCEL employs the following strategies to assist legislators:

- **Educate** lawmakers about state environmental issues through online materials, factsheets, email alerts, webinars, and social media outreach.
- **Empower** legislators by fostering peer-to-peer learning and collaboration across states and regions.
- **Replicate** successes of Caucus members by sharing winning strategies and messaging.
- **Alert** lawmakers about coordinated anti-environmental efforts and provide defensive messaging and strategies.

FROM OUR MEMBERS:

"NCEL distills the best developments in environment and energy policy and presents this information to members in a timely and engaging way. I rely on NCEL."



- Denise Provost
Massachusetts State Representative

"When I began working on my bill to ban hydraulic fracturing in Maryland, I reached out to the NCEL staff for assistance. They provided resources and support that helped me in my efforts to make Maryland the first state with natural gas reserves to ban fracking through legislation."



- David Fraser-Hidalgo
Maryland Delegate



2017 Issue Area Overview

Climate and Energy

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

In the aftermath of the U.S. withdrawal of the Paris Agreement and attacks on the EPA Clean Power Plan, state legislators are more energized than ever to act on climate. NCEL participants are working to make deep reductions in carbon emissions in the power, heating, and transportation sectors. NCEL staff organize legislators around energy issues and provide them with the tools to pursue the most impactful policies in their states.

CARBON PRICING

As the convener of carbon pricing bill authors and champions, in partnership with Meridian Institute and the American Sustainable Business Institute, NCEL facilitates quarterly meetings and in-state briefings to catalyze collaboration across state and party lines. As a result, these legislators have announced their united effort by forming the Carbon Costs Coalition, which began with nine founding states and more expressing interest to join in 2018.



OCEAN ACIDIFICATION

Carbon dioxide emissions are causing ocean acidity to rise. Washington State Senator Kevin Ranker passed a nation-leading bill creating a panel to address ocean acidification in 2012. Since then, through NCEL's partnership on this topic with The Ocean Foundation, legislators have replicated his success by passing similar bills in CA, NH, NY, OR, and RI.



REPOWER 100%

Hawai'i passed the first 100% renewable energy bill in 2015, and chief bill author Rep. Chris Lee has presented on it at two separate NCEL forums. As a result, momentum to reach a 100% carbon-free economy has been spreading in states across the country. In partnership with the Blue Planet Foundation, NCEL brought together key legislators from eight states for a workshop for legislators to collaborate on strategies and messaging. Afterwards CO, NM, and PA introduced 100% RPS bills, with more states expected to join soon.



SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES

As the country transitions to a low-carbon economy, it is vital that underserved communities share in the benefits of greater deployment of renewable resources. This project works to ensure that low-income communities have access to financing and economic development possible through community ownership of renewables, efficiency retrofits, and access to electrified transportation.



2017 Issue Area Overview

Conservation

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Wildlife, their habitats, and natural landscapes everywhere are increasingly threatened by human activity and climate change. NCEC equips state legislators with resources and knowledge to advance effective policies that conserve these vital resources. In 2017, we launched the new NCEC web page, Conservation Clearinghouse. The redesign compiles all of NCEC's conservation issue work into one location, including information on current and emerging issues, resources such as briefing books and fact sheets, and the latest conservation news. Visit the web page at necel.net/conservation.



WILDLIFE TRAFFICKING

In 2016, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service instituted a ban on ivory trade across state lines. However, it is up to states to regulate trade within their borders. Throughout 2017, 13 states introduced legislation to ban the sale of products made from ivory and other products from endangered species. NCEC's Conservation Program staff provided direct assistance to legislators working on this issue in five states, including where bills successfully passed in North Carolina and New Mexico.

WILDLIFE CORRIDORS AND CROSSINGS

Wildlife corridors and crossings are a vital and cost-effective way to maintain resilient landscapes for fish and wildlife and to protect biodiversity. During 2017, NCEC began working on this topic and assisted legislators working on corridors and crossings in three states. As a result of these efforts, more bills are expected to be introduced in 2018 and 2019 as the project is grown in partnership with the Wildlands Network, the Center for Large Landscape Conservation, and the Endangered Species Coalition.



PUBLIC LANDS

Throughout 2017, industry and the federal government pushed efforts to sell off public lands for coal/oil/gas development, but NCEC participants are pushing back. Outdoor recreation and state fish and wildlife funding were featured at the 2017 National Issues Forum where 71 legislators from 29 states expressed a strong interest in advancing these policies. NCEC staff are following up on each of those requests, including assisting legislators in New York and Arizona who have introduced a bill enhancing outdoors programs for veterans.



2017 Issue Area Overview

Environmental Health

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Tens of thousands of chemicals that are untested or known to be toxic to human health have been added to consumer products, including furniture, electronics, and even children's products and toys. As the Scott Pruitt-led EPA slow-walks toxics regulation, state action on these issues continues to play a vital role in protecting consumers. NCEL partners with the Safer States network to identify opportunities to remove these toxins from the environment and offer Americans safer, more natural options.

GREAT LAKES

NCEL has coordinated a regional project in the Great Lakes Region since 2001. This past year, we continued to work with legislators throughout the region on a wide range of issues including water quality, invasive species, and energy. In November, NCEL hosted the annual Great Lakes Regional Forum which convened state legislators from across the region to discuss a variety of threats to the health of the Lakes and their surrounding communities, including water quality and nutrient pollution, plastic pollution, and green schools.

MISSISSIPPI RIVER LEGISLATIVE CAUCUS

This year, NCEL created the Mississippi River Legislative Caucus (MRLC) to build the capacity of legislators in the river corridor to more effectively address river health and water quality issues. The project includes opportunities for state lawmakers to interface with river mayors through a partnership with the Mississippi River Cities and Towns Initiative (MRCTI), the Congressional Mississippi River Caucus, advocacy groups, and business leaders.

CHEMICAL POLICY

In partnership with the Safer States network, NCEL directly supported legislators in Minnesota, Maine, North Carolina, Connecticut, Rhode Island, and other states who moved bills banning toxic flame retardants in children's products and furniture. NCEL hosted a strategy session with bill authors from both parties in Maine in January 2017, and the bill went on to pass both the state House and Senate nearly unanimously. Later in the year, Rhode Island passed a similar bill. Because of NCEL educational efforts through forums and email alerts, members also introduced fragrance disclosure requirement legislation in California and Mississippi.





RECAP OF 2017 NATIONAL ISSUES FORUM

"NCEL regularly presents cutting-edge information and suggested solutions on pertinent environmental issues. I find my participation to be extremely worthwhile!"

- Senator David Senjem, Minnesota

In August 2017, 128 state legislators from 36 states convened at the 2017 National Issues Forum organized by the National Caucus of Environmental Legislators. The event offered opportunities for attendees to collaborate on policy solutions to combat climate change, remove toxins from drinking water and consumer products, and conserve water, public lands, and endangered species.

The forum agenda featured a keynote address from former EPA Administrator Gina McCarthy, who spoke about the ability of states to innovate and create environmental models for the federal government to adopt. Former California Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger also keynoted the event. He highlighted the fact that states had already been passing legislation that proves it is possible to simultaneously protect the environment and support economic growth, and noted that such efforts are now more important than ever.

Schwarzenegger underscored the need for bipartisanship cooperation and state and local action on climate and the environment. "I don't see the environment as a political issue.

There is no Republican air or Democratic air, we all breathe the same air. There is no Republican water or Democratic water, we all drink the same water, so let's work together on this," he said. "States, provinces, cities, and neighborhoods have tremendous power, and we should wield that power. This is why it's so important that we fill the vacuum where the federal government has fallen short. We are going to step in and we are going to do the work."

DIGITAL ENVIRONMENTAL LEGISLATIVE HANDBOOK

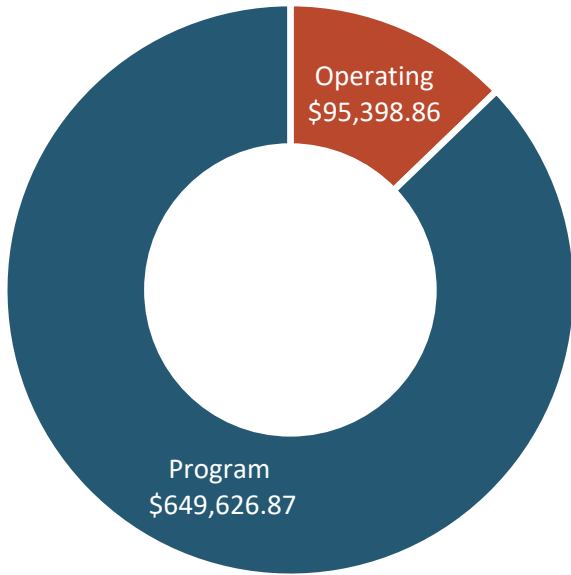
The USC Schwarzenegger Institute and NCEL introduced the Digital Environmental Legislative Handbook (envirolaws.org). This online resource is a searchable database of impactful environmental legislation to support lawmakers on a variety of issues.





2017 FINANCIAL REPORTS

NCEL 2017 Expenses



EMPOWERING ENVIRONMENTAL STATE CHAMPIONS

For more information on donating to NCEL visit ncel.net/donate.

To learn about more ways to support NCEL, please contact Jeff Mauk at 202-744-1006 or via email: jmauk@ncel.net

SPECIAL THANKS TO ALL OF OUR SUPPORTERS.....



.....AND MANY OTHERS!



Looking Ahead 2018 Priorities





Climate and Energy

-  **Carbon Pricing** - NCEL is working with state lawmakers in Northeast states to expand their knowledge of carbon pricing, and to create opportunities for legislators with like-minded interests to make connections across state lines to share ideas and lessons learned.
-  **Sustainable Communities/Clean Energy** - NCEL is empowering state legislators to be stronger partners with local governments in ensuring equity in the transition to clean energy through better-aligned state policies and increased public and private capital and financing solutions for disadvantaged communities.
-  **Towards 100% Renewable** - Partnering with the Blue Planet Foundation, NCEL is organizing legislators who are working on deep decarbonization in their states, including strengthened renewable energy standards, with a goal of achieving 100% renewable energy by mid-century.





Conservation

-  **Outdoor Recreation and Education** - During the National Issues Forum, over 70 legislators from 29 states expressed a strong interest in pursuing policies that enhance access to the outdoors for all ages and communities. NCEL and Meridian are forming a coalition of advocacy groups to identify state legislative champions to advance policies across the country.
-  **Wildlife Corridors and Crossings** - Wildlife corridors and crossings are a vital and cost effective way to maintain resilient landscapes for fish and wildlife and to protect watersheds, as well as to reduce human/wildlife conflicts such as car crashes. NCEL will continue to work with legislators to integrate these policies into state highway planning throughout 2018.



Environmental Health

-  **Chemical Policy** - Untested and unregulated chemicals in children's products, furniture, and household goods contribute to a number of health issues, particularly related to childhood development. NCEL is working to equip state legislators with the necessary knowledge and resources to enact strong protections in their states, and incentivize markets and industries to offer safer, greener alternatives.
-  **Plastics** - Plastic pollution in our oceans and waterways is a major threat to ecosystems and human health, and a growing program area for NCEL. Working in partnership with organizations like the Lonely Whale Foundation, NCEL is working to identify state legislative champions to empower and educate to get plastic pollution reduction policies passed.



NCEL Founder Spotlight Leon Billings



Few are able to claim a legacy quite as impactful as that of the Honorable Leon Billings. Leon established a name for himself as a staffer for U.S. Senator Edmund Muskie in the 1950s and 60's, and would go on to be the chief U.S. Senate staffer responsible for writing the Clean Water Act and the Clean Air Act.

Following many years of staffing on the Hill and partial retirement, Leon ran for a seat in the General Assembly of Maryland that had been held by his late wife. Leon was shocked upon taking office how few staff he was afforded as a State Delegate, and his frustration only grew the more he learned about the lack of resources available to other state legislatures across the country.

Leon's problem-solving nature was on full display at the 1995 meeting of the National Conference of State Legislators, where he and a bipartisan group of legislators were troubled by the national

organizing being conducted by polluter and industry groups to roll back environmental regulations. Leon envisioned a similar, nonpartisan network that would coordinate state legislators across the country on pro-environment efforts, share best practices, and augment legislators' capacity in the form of remote environmental staff.

In 1996, Leon established an informal network of state legislators from across the country to coordinate their environmental efforts. In 1999, the National Caucus of Environmental Legislators was formalized as a project of the Edmund S. Muskie Foundation, and would become an independent 501(c)(3) organization in 2007. Leon played an active role in the growth and development of the organization for 20 years.

Although Leon passed suddenly in November 2016, his legacy is carried on by his wife, three children, and the organization he created. NCEL staff are committed to ensuring that Leon's vision of service and commitment to state legislators will continue to guide the organization and that his passion for protecting the environment will remain the core of NCEL's work.