



Texas Public Policy Foundation
**LEGISLATOR'S GUIDE
TO THE ISSUES
2021-2022**

Local Government Climate Policies

The Issue

The Green New Deal may have died an anticlimactic death in the U.S. House of Representatives, but the push for big-government climate change programs is not over—nationally or in Texas. More than 400 cities, including 6 in the Lone Star State at the time of this writing (Austin, Dallas, Houston, San Antonio, San Marcos, and Smithville) [have pledged](#) to implement their own versions of the Green New Deal and reach “net-zero” carbon emissions by 2050. Their proposals to achieve this goal range from 100% renewable energy mandates to electric vehicle subsidies to “zero-carbon” building codes.

These climate action plans will dramatically increase the cost of energy; yet they have [no measurable effect on the climate](#). The Paris Agreement is projected to reduce global average temperatures by [just 0.17° Celsius by 2100](#)—and that is if all signatories, including the United States, meet their emission reduction pledges through the end of the century, a highly unlikely scenario. If this global initiative cannot even breach two tenths of a degree, any city’s—or even *all cities’*—tax expenditures will be fruitless.

Ultimately, climate action plans are not about the environment at all but are rather thinly veiled excuses to grow government, exercise social control, and appease public pressure campaigns by environmental groups. While cities can make the argument that improved resiliency is in their constituents’ best interests, those goals can be much better achieved through infrastructure upgrades and disaster preparedness projects. However, even these expenditures should be considered carefully, as widespread assumptions that climate change is causing more severe natural disasters are [not supported by meteorological evidence](#).

Furthermore, nationwide polling reveals more than half of Americans [would not be willing to pay 10 dollars](#) more for electricity in order to combat climate change. Similarly, public support for programs like renewable energy subsidies drops dramatically when respondents are informed about the potential cost increases. This is not a surprising result given that nearly a third of U.S. households report facing [challenges in paying their energy bills](#).

It is simply not the proper role of government, particularly in general-law cities, to ban certain fuels or pressure citizens to give up their cars in favor of electric vehicles or public transportation, especially without sufficient justification. Yet [the city of Berkeley, California, has done just that](#), banning natural gas hookups in new multifamily buildings, and [more than a dozen other cities have followed suit](#). In response, the [Arizona Legislature](#) recently voted to outlaw local governments from passing similar bans.

No city, state, or country has managed to abolish fossil fuels—our most affordable, reliable, and abundant source of energy—and every effort to do so has resulted in significantly higher costs. Germany’s electricity prices have [increased by more than 50%](#)

since it began pushing renewables in 2006, and the same results are playing out in Georgetown, Texas, where the city utility is [more than \\$30 million in the hole](#) after choosing to purchase all of its electricity from wind and solar. City leaders cannot afford to blindly pursue environmental agendas without fully considering their costs, especially the costs to their poorest residents.

As climate alarmism continues to flourish in the mainstream media and pop culture, legislators should be aware that these issues may be arising in their districts, even in smaller cities. Public awareness of climate action plans is often low, and legislators and their staff can help their constituents avoid the heavy price of city overreach through public outreach and legislation.

The Facts

- No sound scientific evidence exists to support apocalyptic climate change or the popular assumption that severe weather patterns have gotten worse. The best science suggests future temperature increases are likely to remain mild and manageable while our resiliency continues to improve.
- Efforts among U.S. cities to reduce carbon dioxide emissions will not have any measurable effect on the climate, especially as developing nations industrialize and increase their share of global emissions.
- Renewable energy mandates and subsidies lead to higher electricity prices and less reliable electricity—something our economy, quality of life, and public safety depend on. Furthermore, wind and solar create more environmental problems than they solve by increasing the impact of our energy system on the land.

Recommendations

- Oppose any local or state initiative that would mandate or favor renewable energy or otherwise drive up the cost of electricity.
- In particular, do not allow cities to impose restrictions on nonelectric vehicles or implement electric-only or net-zero emissions building codes.
- Require a public cost-benefit analysis on any new energy or environmental regulations.
- Require all electricity generators to meet the same reliability standards, including renewable energy sources.

Resources

[SA Climate Ready: A Pathway for Climate Action and Adaptation](#), City of San Antonio (Oct. 2019).

continued

[*A Long and Expensive Road Ahead: Why San Antonio Can't Afford to Make CPS Energy Carbon-Neutral by 2050*](#) by Charles Griffey and Brent Bennett, Texas Public Policy Foundation (Oct. 2019).

[“Austin’s climate change plan is a government power grab”](#) by Jason Isaac, Life:Powered (Sept. 2019).

[“Green Deals Won’t Save the World, But Access to Energy Will”](#) by Jason Isaac, *RealClear Energy* (April 2019).

