

Key Provisions of RI's New *'Act on Climate'* Law



April 2021

Act on Climate – Key Provisions (Targets)

- It tightens the economy-wide greenhouse gas (GHG) emission reduction targets and makes them mandatory. The new targets are:
 - 45% GHG emission reductions below 1990 levels by 2030
 - 80% below 1990 levels by 2040
 - Net-zero emissions by 2050

These targets are consistent with efforts in nine other states and with the national goals of the Biden Administration.

Act on Climate – Key Provisions (**Plans**)

- It tasks the Executive Climate Change Coordinating Council (EC4) with developing new greenhouse gas reduction plans, including an update of the current plan by the end of 2022.
- Comprehensive economy-wide plans are due **every five years**, with the first plan due in 2025.
- Along with reducing GHG emissions, these broad plans are required to incorporate other considerations, such as assessing and redressing impacts to environmental justice populations and supporting workers impacted by the transition to a reduced-carbon economy.

Act on Climate – Key Provisions (**Regulatory Authority**)

- It provides the member agencies of the EC4, which include DEM and 12 other agencies, with the authority to promulgate regulations needed to meet the GHG emission reduction targets. These new authorities will require significant work by DEM and other state agencies over the coming years.

Act on Climate – Key Provisions (**Enforcement**)

- It includes an enforcement provision – known as the *citizen suit provision* – intended to ensure that state government meets its obligations under the law. Under this provision, the Attorney General, Rhode Island residents, corporations, or other organizations can bring suit against the state seeking a judicial order directing the state to fulfill its obligations. The law includes limitations on when these lawsuits can be filed and provides government with the chance to respond prior to a lawsuit being filed.

Links to Enacted Bill

- The enacted legislation (S-0078A/H-5445A) can be found at:

<http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText21/SenateText21/S0078A.pdf>

<http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText21/HouseText21/H5445A.pdf>