

GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA  
SESSION 2023

**H.B. 720**  
**Apr 18, 2023**  
**HOUSE PRINCIPAL CLERK**

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HOUSE BILL DRH10369-MH-55

Short Title: State Clean Energy Goal for 2050.

(Public)

Sponsors: Representative Autry.

Referred to:

1 A BILL TO BE ENTITLED  
2 AN ACT TO ESTABLISH A STATE GOAL OF ONE HUNDRED PERCENT CLEAN  
3 ENERGY BY 2050 AND TO PROMOTE THE CREATION OF GREEN JOBS.

4 Whereas, since 1880, climate change has increased the global average surface  
5 temperature by 1.1 degree Celsius (1.9 degrees Fahrenheit); and

6 Whereas, climate change is expected to increasingly impact North Carolina's  
7 temperatures, precipitation, and sea level with harmful consequences in coming years; and

8 Whereas, climate change and global average temperature increases are primarily due  
9 to human-caused fossil fuels emissions, including coal, oil, and natural gas, according to the  
10 United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, National Academy of Sciences,  
11 American Meteorological Society, United States Environmental Protection Agency, United  
12 States Department of Defense, and numerous other leading scientific, academic, and  
13 governmental authorities both in the United States and internationally; and

14 Whereas, a final agreement of the United Nations Conference of Parties (COP21),  
15 including the United States and a total of 195 nations, was reached in Paris, France, on December  
16 12, 2015, entered into force on November 4, 2016, and stated the aim to "hold the increase in the  
17 global average temperature to well below 2 degrees Celsius above preindustrial levels and pursue  
18 efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5 degrees Celsius above preindustrial levels"; and

19 Whereas, scientists have concluded the concentration of carbon dioxide, one of the  
20 primary greenhouse gasses driving climate change, is currently at about 420 parts per million and  
21 continues to rise and will likely stay above this level for the indefinite future for the first time in  
22 millions of years; and

23 Whereas, the past eight years have been the hottest years on record, and the years  
24 2016 and 2020 are tied as the hottest ever recorded; and

25 Whereas, an increase in the global average temperature, if not stopped, will have  
26 major adverse impacts on both the natural and human-made environments due to longer, more  
27 intense heat waves, prolonged droughts, rising sea levels, ocean acidification, and more intense  
28 and frequent extreme weather events; and

29 Whereas, these physical effects are expected to lead to water scarcity, food insecurity,  
30 increasing numbers of refugees, increased poverty, and mass extinctions of species; and

31 Whereas, according to a report from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric  
32 Administration, natural disasters cost the country at least \$165 billion in 2022 due to 184 different  
33 weather and climate disasters, ranging from hurricanes to wildfires to winter storms; and

34 Whereas, in 2018, Hurricane Florence devastated North Carolina, with over 40  
35 confirmed fatalities and damage across the State approaching an estimated \$17 billion; and



1           Whereas, climate models predict that the country can expect more of these  
2 catastrophic and costly events over time; and

3           Whereas, studies completed by Stanford University, the Brookings Institution, the  
4 United Nations, and others point to the severe economic costs of climate change and continuing  
5 use of fossil fuels, estimating billions of dollars a year in costs nationally and trillions globally;  
6 and

7           Whereas, leading economists, policy experts, and business leaders conclude that  
8 transitioning to a clean energy economy available for all would create millions of green jobs  
9 nationally, improve our living standards, and boost economic growth in coming years; and

10           Whereas, climate change and the continuing use of fossil fuels disproportionately  
11 impact communities of color and low-income communities in North Carolina and throughout the  
12 United States, and specifically (i) climate hazards, such as increased flooding, extreme heat, and  
13 poor air quality, disproportionately harm minority, low-income, and politically marginalized  
14 communities, (ii) communities of color and low-income communities are disproportionately  
15 exposed to fossil fuel pollution that causes cancer, asthma, and other serious health problems,  
16 and (iii) oil refineries, natural gas facilities, and the dirtiest coal-fired power plants, which  
17 produce coal ash, are disproportionately located in communities of color; and

18           Whereas, recent studies conclude that the United States could achieve net-zero  
19 greenhouse gas emissions across all sectors by the year 2050, and specifically the nation's energy  
20 sector could achieve 80% clean electricity by 2030 and 100% clean electricity by 2035, while  
21 creating numerous green jobs; and

22           Whereas, municipalities, organizations, businesses, and academic institutions  
23 throughout the world have set a goal to achieve carbon or climate neutrality by 2050 or earlier;  
24 and

25           Whereas, over 450 American colleges and universities have made a commitment to  
26 reduce greenhouse gases, including Appalachian State University, Catawba College, Davidson  
27 College, Duke University, Fayetteville State University, Guilford College, North Carolina State  
28 University, the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, the University of North Carolina at  
29 Charlotte, Wake Technical Community College, and Warren Wilson College; and

30           Whereas, North Carolina is poised to create numerous clean jobs, advance economic  
31 growth, and address climate change through the use of solar and wind energy, given that the state  
32 (i) ranks fourth in the nation in installed solar capacity, exceeding 8,147 megawatts, (ii) has  
33 enough installed solar capacity to power nearly 956,000 homes, (iii) has a solar market valued at  
34 \$11 billion, with nearly \$1 billion invested in 2021, (iv) has more than 240 solar companies at  
35 work throughout the value chain, as well as nearly 7,000 solar jobs, and (v) has more offshore  
36 wind energy potential than any Atlantic state; and

37           Whereas, since solar photovoltaic system prices in the United States have dropped by  
38 more than 60% over the past decade; and

39           Whereas, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's Sixth Assessment Report  
40 recommends a global goal of achieving net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by the early 2050s,  
41 which is necessary to stabilize the global average temperature to avoid climate catastrophe; Now,  
42 therefore,

43 The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts:

44           **SECTION 1.** Article 7 of Chapter 62 of the General Statutes is amended by adding  
45 a new section to read:

46 **"§ 62-133.10A. One hundred percent clean energy goal for North Carolina by 2050.**

47 **In order to avoid climate catastrophe, to promote job creation and economic growth, and to**  
48 **protect the Earth for current and future generations, it shall be the goal of the State that one**  
49 **hundred percent (100%) of the total retail sales of electricity in North Carolina shall be generated**  
50 **from renewable energy resources by December 31, 2050. The State Energy Office, in**  
51 **consultation with the Commission and the Public Staff, shall develop a plan to achieve this goal**

1 and shall submit the plan to the 2024 Regular Session of the 2023 General Assembly upon its  
2 convening."

3 **SECTION 2.** This act is effective when it becomes law.