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Put A Price On It Virginia

DRAFT 2018/2019 Plan

Description: To empower students in Virginia to advocate for a price on greenhouse gas emissions.

Background: Our Climate began as a youth-led statewide movement to enact strong climate policy and is now a national organization dedicated to putting a price on greenhouse gas pollution. In 2016, we partnered with the National Geographic series *Years of Living Dangerously* to launch our national campaign: Put A Price On It. Since the campaign launched, we have empowered 250 young leaders to become effective climate policy leaders, educated dozens of lawmakers about the importance of carbon pricing, and reached over 5 million people via social and earned media.

Summary: Putting a price on carbon pollution is a powerful, bipartisan approach to addressing climate change; by accounting for the true costs of carbon-based energy, there is an economic incentive to reduce emissions and transition to a clean energy economy. California and a growing number of states in the Northeast have already implemented carbon pricing policies in the form of cap-and-trade allowance trading markets; in the Northeast, the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI) imposes a price on the electricity sector and invests in energy efficiency and clean energy projects. Virginia's previous Governor McAuliffe proposed joining RGGI by 2020 and reducing carbon emissions by 30% in 2017, and negotiations to link to RGGI, though not join as a full member, are underway. However, the legislative bill to join RGGI as a full member lacked sufficient support and died in committee.

With a receptive government and a strong public university system, Virginia is an ideal state to organize students to create the necessary pressure to price carbon. Due to the politically diverse nature of the state, a bipartisan approach to carbon pricing will likely be accepted by both Democrats and Republicans. As the first southern state to pass meaningful carbon pricing legislation will set a powerful precedent that market-based climate solutions are not only bipartisan and politically feasible, but a great way to reduce emissions, grow the economy, and create jobs. By becoming the first truly purple state to pass this type of climate policy, Virginia will show the United States that carbon pricing is not a tenant which belongs to the left, but a bipartisan means to improve our economy and world. Furthermore, students mobilized in this coalition will likely continue to advocate for further environmental legislation on both the state and national levels.

Organizing Plan: College campuses are the ideal locations to organize around carbon pricing policy. The lack of meaningful climate action disproportionately harms young people, individuals who will be required to remediate the effects of climate pollution. Well-designed carbon pricing legislation will ensure pollution is dealt with justly and equitably now so students will not have to suffer the burden in the future. Research by the PEW foundation shows that younger generations see climate change as a more serious



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threat, especially young Republicans compared to their older party members¹. Furthermore, college is a time of learning and growth, and many students will be predisposed to volunteer time in a coalition run entirely by their peers in order to gain experience in political and environmental advocacy. A three tiered plan to grow a coalition around colleges will be utilized.

1. Students studying relevant subjects and student groups with similar missions from campuses around Virginia will be recruited.
2. Students will engage their greater college community, such as organizations and businesses around the college, local high schools, and professors to sign on to a coalition resolution.
3. Students will use the momentum they've built to go out into their greater community and unite more organizations into signing and supporting the coalition.

As this coalition is being built simultaneously on campuses and communities in various parts of the state, it will grow rapidly and will include students and constituencies from diverse backgrounds and geographies. Each participating campus will organize a local committee focused on coalition building, hosting events, and meeting with lawmakers in the local community, with leaders/representatives from each local committee making up a steering committee to ensure a united and cohesive message.

Long-term Goal: To put a strong price on carbon in accordance with Our Climate carbon pricing principles of strength and growth, casting a wide net, being just and equitable, and enforcing a durable price (<https://www.ourclimate.us/principles>).

12-Month Goals: Put A Price On It Virginia Seeks to accomplish the following by September 2019: this

1. Build a strong coalition of 50 student groups, advocacy organizations, businesses and faith communities. 30 students will be trained and empowered to lead and contribute to coalition efforts.
2. Build public support for carbon pricing in Virginia by publishing at least 5 opinion pieces, organizing 2 statewide events, and reaching 50,000 people on social media.

Young people are overwhelmingly supportive of climate action and eager to work towards an equitable transition to clean energy. By providing them with the tools, trainings, and experience to engage in the democratic process and advance concrete solutions, we are building long-term power to protect our planet and build a socially just world. By putting a price on carbon in the Virginia, we will catalyze bipartisan support for comprehensive climate policy that is so desperately needed.

Request: While the National Put A Price On It Campaign is well established, the Virginia State Campaign is in a stage of growth. By joining/founding a local committee or connecting us with any students who may be interested, we can fuel a strong movement.

¹<http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2018/05/14/many-republican-millennials-differ-with-older-party-members-on-climate-change-and-energy-issues/>