

COMMENTARY

Virginia Republicans Embrace Criticism of Virginia Clean Economy Act

By Collister Johnson Jr.

Virginia's law requiring the state's primary electric utilities, Dominion Energy and Appalachian Power, to generate their electricity exclusively from wind and solar sources by 2045 will damage the state's economy and environment alike.

The law, enacted in 2020 and misleadingly labeled the "Virginia Clean Economy Act" (VCEA), radically changed Virginia's energy policy, which for many years supported a balanced portfolio of electricity sources: coal, natural gas, nuclear, petroleum, and renewables.

Harms Highlighted

Beginning in early 2021, the Committee for a Constructive Tomorrow (CFACT) published a series of articles exposing the harmful environmental and economic consequences this radical legislation will impose on the state.

The notable effects of Virginia's 100 percent wind and solar mandate are likely to be spread far and wide, including an \$800 per year increase in electricity costs for the average ratepayer, the clearcutting of forests and destruction of productive farmland to make way for a vast array of solar panels covering 490 square miles of land, and the solar and wind industrial facilities becoming part of the "public interest," thus ending historic State Corporation Commission regulatory authority over excessive electricity rates, the CFACT analyses note.

After CFACT released its reports, the Suburban Virginia Republican Coalition (SUVGOP), a Republican support group focused on suburban voters, concluded the VCEA, a bill created, pushed, and passed entirely by Democrats, must be repealed. The SUVGOP says this issue can galvanize voters in low-income and environmentally focused communities, which would help expand the party's appeal.

Heading into Virginia's 2021 statewide elections, the SUVGOP has said it hopes its efforts will have a national influence by demonstrating that exposing the adverse consequences of wind



and solar energy can be a winning message for Republicans.

Started on Web

The SUVGOP began its effort by creating a website called RepealVCEA.com.

The website includes a video documenting the recent clearcutting of a mature forest in Spotsylvania County, just outside the city of Fredericksburg, to create the massive 6,300-acre Fawn Lake solar facility, the largest solar project east of the Mississippi.

As part of its ongoing efforts to generate support for repealing the VCEA, the SUVGOP worked with Virginia state Del. Nick Freitas (R-Culpeper) to introduce a bill to repeal the VCEA. The SUVGOP also held a series of receptions for all 18 GOP candidates for statewide office in the 2021 elections, where it urged each of the them to support repealing the law.

SUVGOP members also wrote articles for Virginia publications such as the *Jefferson Policy Journal* and *Bacon's Rebellion*, to educate the public about the high economic and environmental costs of the VCEA.

In addition, the SUVGOP compiled the only comprehensive list of all solar projects proposed or constructed in the Commonwealth. The list revealed there are more industrial-sized solar projects in Virginia than in any other state on a

per capita basis, despite Virginia ranking 24th in terms of annual sunshine.

'Not Doable, Affordable, or Good'

The Republican candidates for statewide office incorporated the "Repeal VCEA" message into their policy positions on energy.

E&E News, a leading publication covering environment and climate issues, summed up the Virginia GOP's position with the headline: "GOP united in ire over energy law in VA Governor's race."

"GOP candidates generally agree on one thing: They hate the state's new energy law and want to repeal it," the article states.

"We need an electrical grid which is stable, and we absolutely have to change direction," Glenn Youngkin, who won the Virginia GOP's gubernatorial nomination, told *E&E News*. "We must change direction from the clean energy plan that was passed, ... because it is not doable, affordable, or good for Virginia."

CFACT's research really opened people's eyes to high cost of the VCEA, says SUVGOP co-chair Ron Wright.

"I don't think we could have launched and sustained the Repeal VCEA campaign without the information and assistance provided by CFACT," Wright said.

"We hope our efforts will lead to success for all Republicans, not only in Vir-



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NOMINEE

ginia this year but also throughout the country in 2022," Wright said.

Clarifying the Consequences

This issue is an important part of the organization's mandate to publicize facts and educate the public about the effects of laws on individuals and the economy, says CFACT President Craig Rucker.

"CFACT's primary mission is public education and influencing the debate on important policy issues such as electricity generation," Rucker said. "Climate alarmists who claim carbon dioxide is a 'pollutant' and that there is a climate crisis are simply scaremongers who cannot support their beliefs with facts and scientific research."

"CFACT is pleased to join with others, such as The Heartland Institute, to provide policymakers with facts and truth to rebut many of the myths, misinformation, and outright falsehoods advanced by some of the mainstream media concerning climate change," Rucker said.

Having candidates in the upcoming November election take a clear stand on the VCEA gives Virginia voters an opportunity to express their views on the long-term desirability of this and other government mandates—and the politicians who support them.

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