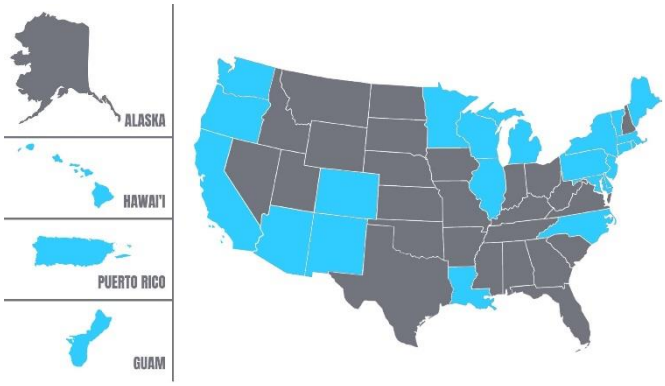
Environmental Defense Fund

# U.S. LEADERSHIP STATES CAN SIGNIFICANTLY SHRINK GAP TO PARIS AGREEMENT GOAL, IF THEY ACHIEVE THEIR CLIMATE TARGETS

New EDF analysis finds that leading governors have a pivotal role to play in getting the U.S. closer to its 2030 Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC), with the ability to cut the remaining distance to the Paris commitment in half — if they achieve their own targets.

## The role of climate leadership states: securing pollution reductions

Many states have been in the position of climate leadership for years, stepping up at a critical time when the Trump administration pulled out of the Paris Agreement and pressing forward with their own climate goals and policies. 23 states, along with Puerto Rico and Guam, have made their own commitments to cut climate pollution in line with the U.S. NDC.

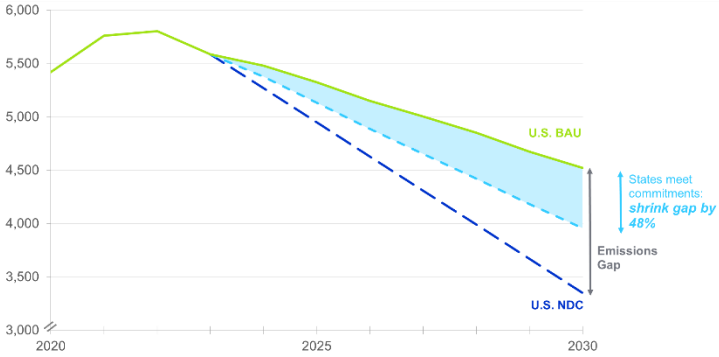



These states are uniquely positioned to have a significant impact on climate pollution, as they make up **43% of U.S. emissions**.

## How leadership states can help shrink the U.S. emissions gap in 2030

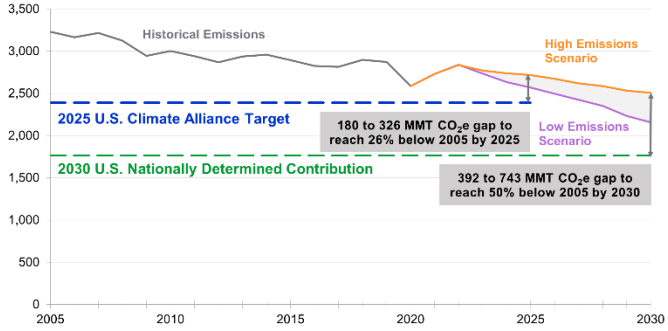
To evaluate states' progress on lowering climate pollution, EDF analyzed updated 2023 projections from Rhodium Group's U.S. Climate Service, which incorporates projected reductions from the Inflation Reduction Act and Bipartisan Infrastructure Law.

Our analysis finds that, if leadership states were to successfully reduce emissions in line with their established targets, they **would shrink the remaining U.S. emissions gap in 2030 by 48%**.

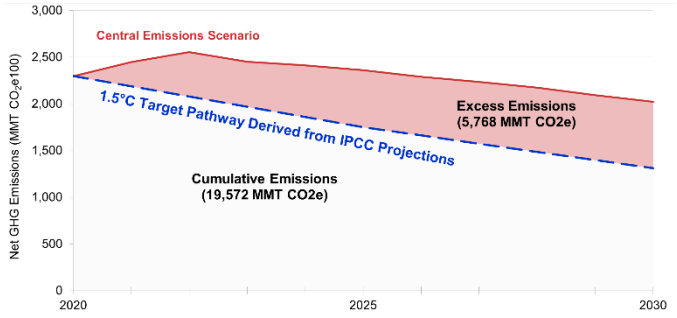



## States must step action to achieve 2025 and 2030 targets

To help shrink the emissions gap, state leaders must drastically step up ambitious and comprehensive policies to cut pollution in line with their goals. Without additional policies, these states are only projected to reduce net emissions **16% to 22% below 2005 levels by 2025** and **23% to 38% below 2005 levels by 2030**, compared to their commitments to reach at least a 26% reduction by 2025 and at least 50% by 2030.



Our analysis also finds that states lag well behind the necessary pace of reductions. Rapid action matters because short-lived gases, like methane pollution, play a central role in slowing and limiting near-term warming, while long-lived gases, like carbon pollution, can stay in the atmosphere for centuries. That's why the pace of reductions — the **emissions trajectory** — is even more important than hitting a target in a specific year.




**States are projected to emit 29% more climate pollution between 2020 and 2030 than a path aligned with their science-based goals** — overshooting the emissions "budget" by 5.8 billion metric tons of $CO_2$ equivalent over the decade.

The excess pollution from leadership states is equivalent to the emissions from nearly 1.3 billion cars driven for a year, or over 1,500 coal-fired power plants operating for a year — underscoring the profound implications for total climate pollution. Clearly, leadership states must put policies in place that not only meet targets in 2025 and 2030, but also accelerate near-term reductions and limit cumulative pollution.

## How states can meet their commitments and drive U.S. climate progress forward

With federal investments making clean energy technology cheaper than ever before, states have an unprecedented opportunity to secure cuts in pollution and drive our nation's progress forward.

- **Set binding targets that achieve early and deep reductions**: States need to set themselves up for long-term success with mandatory targets that create an enforceable framework for reducing emissions at the pace and scale the climate crisis demands. Mandatory targets help lock-in progress, keeping future leaders from rolling back climate action.
- **Ensure environmental and economic benefits are directed to disproportionately-impacted communities**: Strategies for limiting climate pollution must be tailored to improve local pollution impacts and directly support clean energy deployment and economic benefits for the most overburdened and underserved populations. Strong community engagement throughout the policymaking process is essential.
- **Leverage existing authority to limit pollution**: Regardless of state legislative action on emissions, governors committing to concrete pollution reduction targets can leverage existing authority to enact regulations that lower climate pollution. Former Oregon Governor Kate Brown used her authority to direct the state's environmental regulators to develop a program that would cap and reduce emissions from Oregon's major sources of climate pollution.
- **Establish a declining, enforceable limit on emissions**: A pollution limit is essential to provide a backstop for other complementary policies, guaranteeing the targeted emission cuts will be achieved, even if other policies fall short. Washington state set the most ambitious climate pollution limit in the nation, which covers all major sources of the state's emissions and declines in line with its goals.
- **Pair pollution limits with policies that catalyze development and deployment of clean technologies**: Enforceable limits on climate pollution can work hand-in-hand with measures needed to accelerate clean technology deployment, like clean energy incentives, while providing the greatest possible certainty that states will reach their climate targets.
- **Consider an approach that puts a price on pollution**: By pairing an enforceable pollution limit with a price on pollution, as the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative does, states can secure the needed level of emission reductions, while creating a price signal that incentivizes investments in clean energy technologies. It can also generate substantial benefits for communities most vulnerable to climate impacts and other environmental harms by reinvesting revenues into projects in these communities.

**Read the report at edf.org/Z6hM**

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