

## Executive Orders 2007

### Executive Order 59 (2007)

## The Governor's Commission on Climate Change

### Importance of the Issue

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's Fourth Assessment Report stated, with an increased confidence level over previous reports, that most of the observed increase in globally averaged temperatures since the mid-20th century is "very likely due" to the increased anthropogenic greenhouse gas concentrations. Energy consumption is the largest manmade contributor to greenhouse gas emissions. States across the nation are acting to study the effects of climate change and limit their greenhouse gas emissions.

Carbon dioxide emissions rose in Virginia by approximately 34 percent from 1990 to 2004, a rate nearly twice the national average. This increase results, in part, from growth in Virginia's economy and development patterns that have produced sprawl and long commutes. Virginia ranked in the top ten states with a 30 percent increase in gasoline-powered cars during this period.

Over the long term, climate change will affect Virginia's population, wildlife, and economy. The Virginia Institute for Marine Science estimates that the mid-Atlantic sea-level will rise between four and twelve inches by 2030, threatening coastal islands and low-lying areas. Air and sea temperature changes would cause more frequent tropical storms with increased damage to Virginia communities. The Chesapeake Bay is particularly susceptible to damage caused by climate change. Changing rain and temperature patterns would disrupt agriculture and forestry.

This administration recently released a first-ever comprehensive energy plan for the Commonwealth. The Virginia Energy Plan was prepared pursuant to legislation that was enacted in 2006, and covers all aspects of energy production and consumption in Virginia: fuel demand and supply, infrastructure, impacts of energy use on the environment, and energy research and development capabilities. The Plan identifies four overall goals, and one of these is to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 30 percent by 2025, bringing emissions back to 2000 levels. This goal will be partially achieved through energy conservation and renewable energy actions identified in the Plan. Further study will be required to formulate a plan to fully achieve the goal, and the Energy Plan recommends the creation a Commission on Climate Change to prepare a Climate Change Action Plan.

Accordingly, in this order I establish a Governor's Commission on Climate Change.

### Establishment of the Commission

While Virginia has taken some steps to combat climate change such as legislatively establishing a voluntary renewable portfolio standard, joining the Climate Registry, and aggressively pursuing energy conservation and efficiency in the Virginia Energy Plan and Executive Order 48, additional tools and resources are needed. Accordingly, based on the consultation with the Secretary of Natural Resources, I am hereby formally establishing the Governor's Commission on Climate Change to prepare a Climate Change Action Plan for Virginia that identifies the additional steps that must be taken to achieve the goal of reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 30 percent by 2025.

### Composition of the Commission

The Governor's Commission on Climate Change shall be chaired by the Secretary of Natural Resources. Recognizing that these efforts will require the work of individuals across a broad spectrum of professions and expertise, the Commission shall include representatives of the General Assembly

and local government; scientific and land use experts; representatives of the following industries: transportation, energy, green building and agriculture/forestry; and representatives of environmental organizations. The Governor shall appoint members of the Commission and the members shall serve at his pleasure. In addition, the Senior Advisor to the Governor on Energy Policy and the Secretaries of Transportation and Commerce and Trade will serve as ex officio members of the Commission.

Staff support for the commission will be provided by the Office of the Secretary of Natural Resources, Office of the Secretary of Transportation, the Office of the Governor, the Department of Environmental Quality, the Department of Mines, Minerals and Energy, and other agencies as may be designated by the Governor. All executive branch agencies shall cooperate fully with the Commission and provide any assistance necessary, upon request of the Commission or its staff.

### **Duties of the Commission**

The Commission is charged with preparing a Climate Change Action Plan that will:

1. Inventory the amount of and contributors to Virginia's greenhouse gas emissions, and projections through 2025,
2. Evaluate expected impacts of climate change on Virginia's natural resources, the health of its citizens, and the economy, including the industries of agriculture, forestry, tourism, and insurance,
3. Identify what Virginia needs to do to prepare for the likely consequences of climate change,
4. Identify the actions (beyond those identified in the Energy Plan) that need to be taken to achieve the 30% reduction goal,
5. Identify climate change approaches being pursued by other states, regions and the federal government.

### **Effective Date of the Order**

This Executive Order shall be effective upon its signing and shall remain in force and effect until January 1, 2009 unless amended or rescinded by further executive order. The Commission shall submit a report with its recommendations by December 15, 2008.

Given under my hand and under the seal of the Commonwealth of Virginia this 21st day of December 2007.

**/s/ Timothy M. Kaine, Governor**

**Attest:**

**/s/ Secretary of the Commonwealth**