

Policy Toolkit

A guide to climate policy



**The
Climate
Initiative**

Climate Change Advocacy
at All Levels of Government

Introduction

Hello!

My name is Javan Santos and I am the Policy Manager for The Climate Initiative. Through these policy toolkits, I hope to show youth that policy can be simple and accessible for young people who are passionate about making change in their community. I started writing policy when I was in high school and have worked in policy for almost seven years now. The experience and knowledge from those years are poured into these toolkits for youth to use to make a difference in climate advocacy. Whether you are hoping to analyze policy, talk to a policymaker, or learn about what it takes to turn an idea into a law, I hope that you will learn something helpful in the resources these toolkits provide.

After you learn the fundamentals of navigating policy, this toolkit also comes with a run down of several different state-specific policy tools. In it, you'll find a history of climate policy in your state, legislators that are supportive of climate policy according to organizations within your state, and other useful information. Climate advocacy is not easy, and there is so much at stake for youth if nothing is done. My hope is that these toolkits will provide you all you need to make much needed change in your state and your community!

If you have any questions or thoughts on how we at The Climate Initiative can help your advocacy, please feel free to reach out to me at:
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Javan

Javan Santos
Policy Manager



Climate Change Advocacy at All Levels of Government

An important part of climate change advocacy is knowing your ideal audience! There are different levels of government, and each level has its own advantages and disadvantages when it comes to advocacy. Understanding the differences will allow you to tailor your advocacy to the change you need.

Federal Government

Pros

- Federal policies are wide sweeping; a federal mandate applies to every single state and jurisdiction in America.
- The federal government is the only one that regulates international affairs, like international trade and foreign relations. If you're looking for change in those realms, this is where you'd go!

Cons

- Federal policies can be slow to pass, and depend on the politics of other states.
- It may be difficult to get legislation for a specific location (i.e., your hometown) passed on the federal level.

Example of Federal Climate Policy: The Green New Deal

State Government

Pros

- The state governments have every authority not vested to the federal government, unless they delegate it to a local government.
- A state law must be followed by all localities, providing a large area for change.
- State legislators have more impact on statewide issues, such as state taxes or the power grid.

Cons

- States cannot make any laws that expressly contradict federal laws, with some exceptions; this may cause a barrier to some types of change.

Example of State Climate Policy: Renewable Portfolio Standards for a state (the goals a state sets for how much of its energy must be from renewable sources)

Tribal Governments

Pros

- Tribal Governments maintain tribal sovereignty, meaning their decisions on climate change are not restricted by federalism, only whatever agreements are found in their constitutions and treaties
- Tribal sovereignty allows for indigenous and other cultural and traditional solutions to climate change

Cons

- Every tribal government has unique limitations based on its constitution and treaty, making it complex to take policies from one tribe and use it in another
- Exists outside of the U.S.'s governmental system, meaning policies created within tribes may have a harder time influencing national policy agendas



Local Governments

Pros

- The local government can handle local concerns quite quickly as their government's jurisdiction is very specific, especially if you're from a small town.
- Laws may be easiest to get passed on the local level because one voice is a larger portion of the population on the local level.
- Small change on the local level can influence policies at the state and national levels. Small wins turn into big wins!

Cons

- Local legislation may be easier and faster, but it might only affect a small area or a small number of people.
- Having environmental policy altered piecemeal throughout the country may not be effective for mitigating climate change or slowing the rise of global temperatures.

Example of a Local Climate Policy: Passing an ordinance mandating the use of solar powered street lights.

Policy Toolkit Survey

Thank you for taking the time to download and utilize one, or all, of our TCI Policy Toolkits!

To ensure that these Policy Toolkits are meeting your needs, please leave any and all feedback that you can to help improve our toolkit offering.

Please take a few minutes to complete a quick survey. You will be entered into our monthly eco-merch giveaway while completing the survey!



[Click here to take the survey.](#)

Thank you!

Stories of Change



The Climate Initiative

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Stories of Change are shaping the way youth and
communities across the nation and beyond are taking
action on climate change.

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