

collaboration between Northeastern and Mid-Atlantic states committed to reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Now, the first step of that process has been completed.

Over two weeks in early December, the EQB held ten virtual public hearings to give Pennsylvanians the opportunity to weigh-in on the state's proposal. The support for RGGI was overwhelming: over ninety-five percent of the nearly 500 hearing participants – a record number of participants for these types of hearings – spoke in favor of joining. The speakers represented a wide range of interests including businesses, faith leaders, farmers, climate experts, health professionals, and community leaders.

As a market-based system, RGGI generates revenue through the sale of power plant emission allowances. The proceeds from these sales could be reinvested to promote job creation and economic growth for the state, advance efficiency and innovation in clean energy, and help consumers meet household energy costs. The DEP estimates that from 2022-2030, participation in RGGI would generate nearly \$2 billion and a net increase of over 27,000 jobs for Pennsylvania.

“Without question, linking to RGGI is only one of many policy actions needed to point Pennsylvania toward a ‘net zero’ energy future. But what it does is start the commitment,” **wrote (<https://pecpa.org/pec-blog/pennsylvania-and-rggi-lets-advance-the-discussion-and-action/>)** John Walliser, Senior Vice President for Legal and Government Affairs at PEC. “It also provides the means through market proceeds to kickstart essential emission reduction technologies like carbon capture, attract further business investment, deploy renewable energy, expand energy efficiency and consumer programs, and help communities and workers.”

Many hearing participants also saw joining RGGI as a step in the right direction.

“For farmers, the realities of our changing climate are undeniable, and seem worse with each new season,” said Michael S. Kovach, a livestock farmer from South Pymatuning Township, Mercer County, and Vice President/Policy Director for Pennsylvania Farmers Union. “Extremes are continually becoming more extreme. Annual precipitation is coming in fewer, heavier, events. Planting and harvesting seasons are shifting. Pest populations affecting both crops and livestock are exploding, and our ability to produce the food that feeds Pennsylvanians is being challenged—just when we need it most. RGGI is an important step toward the ultimate end goal of mitigating the climate changes already threatening our food supply.”

The economic benefits of joining RGGI were also frequently highlighted during the hearings. Some noted in their testimonies the potential for business and job creation for communities that are experiencing economic hardship, especially those that have historically relied on fossil fuel extraction for their livelihoods.

“Like much of western PA, Indiana (County) is struggling with unemployment, a decreased tax base and poverty. RGGI can help to solve those problems by creating jobs, job training programs and providing tax revenue the state can use to support coal country,” said Jonathan Warnock, a Borough of Indiana Council member and Associate Professor of Geoscience at Indiana University of Pennsylvania.

Faith leaders made the moral case for confronting climate change in socially constructive ways. In his

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