

Topline Messages

[CLIMATE / FLOODING] Virginia is ground-zero for climate change and sea level rise. This is a climate crisis, with consistent floods in every corner of our state, especially on the coast, and we have the moral responsibility to respond.

[PUBLIC HEALTH] Climate change is a public health emergency, and front-line communities in Virginia need our protection now.

[EFFICIENCY JUSTICE] Being part of RGGI has already demonstrated the ability to unlock millions of dollars to invest in energy efficiency and flood resiliency. This benefits Virginia consumers, especially low-income families, by lowering utility bills, and it makes Dominion's misguided efforts toward a fracked-gas/methane-gas buildout less feasible.

[ANTI-DOMINION] Dominion Energy has been using its monopoly power to take advantage of Virginians. Being part of RGGI helps take back that power and forces Dominion to pollute less. (Makes the polluters pay - not the ratepayers.)

[ECONOMICS] Addressing the region's flooding and mitigation issues is a matter of economic necessity.

Source: Walton Shepherd, 12/9/2021

Virginia joined RGGI precisely because it's a long-proven, decade-plus program under which emissions have already been halved, while RGGI-region economies also grew at a faster rate than the rest of the country...**and while RGGI-region electricity prices fell**. Now that the RGGI program is newly underway here in Virginia, we will see and celebrate similar success and benefits, over and above Virginia's initial \$200+ million RGGI investment pool for adaptation and energy efficiency.

See below for more detail on all that good news, as we move forward to defend climate action (which below good news will be fully updated in 2022).

Why RGGI is one of the most successful environmental policies in history:

Over the last 12 years, independent studies repeatedly show RGGI's significant economic, jobs, and public health benefits, while helping cut carbon pollution from participating states' power plants in half.

Since the RGGI program began in 2009, its benefits include:

- Creating [45,000 job-years](#) of work (a job-year equals one year's worth of full-time employment for one person);
- Growing the region's economy by [\\$4.3 billion](#) (note that this figure is net of allowance costs);

- Public health benefits of at least [\\$5.7 billion](#)—recent research has shown [the program's health benefits are even larger](#), including additional health benefits to children, such as reductions in childhood asthma, preterm births, and cases of low birth weight and autism spectrum disorder, as a result of particulate pollution reductions attributable to RGGI; and
- Energy bill savings of [\\$1.2 billion](#) thus far, with \$13 billion expected over the lifetime of RGGI-funded measures like energy efficiency improvements.

Since RGGI began, RGGI states' economies have grown [31 percent faster](#) than non-RGGI states and electricity prices in RGGI states have fallen by an average of 5.7 percent even as prices have risen 8.6 percent outside of RGGI. The RGGI states have cut power plant carbon pollution nearly twice as fast as the rest of the country.

Not all of the RGGI states' power sector carbon reductions are attributable to RGGI, but a 2015 study by [researchers from Duke University](#) found that RGGI was the largest single factor, responsible for approximately half of the emissions reductions in the region.

**Source: Nate Benforado, SELC
Dec. 14, 2021**

Talking points on why the Governor cannot simply withdraw Virginia from RGGI through executive action. (link to [full - unbranded - fact sheet](#))

Here are the three top-line takeaways:

1. Virginia's participation is required by statute and regulation. The Governor cannot override statutory requirements and final regulatory programs through unilateral executive action.
2. News articles have suggested the Governor thinks he can tear up Virginia's service agreement with RGGI. He cannot. DEQ entered into that agreement to implement the statutory mandate and the regulation. Tearing it up would be inconsistent with the statute and the regulation.
3. It appears the only effect this misguided tactic would have, would be to prevent Virginia from receiving auction proceeds. Virginia's allowances would still be put into auction and Virginia power plants would still need to buy allowances, because those requirements are *governed by the regulation, not the contract*. **So power plants would still be buying allowances but the Virginians who need help dealing with flooding and struggling families looking to reduce their energy bills would be hung out to dry.**