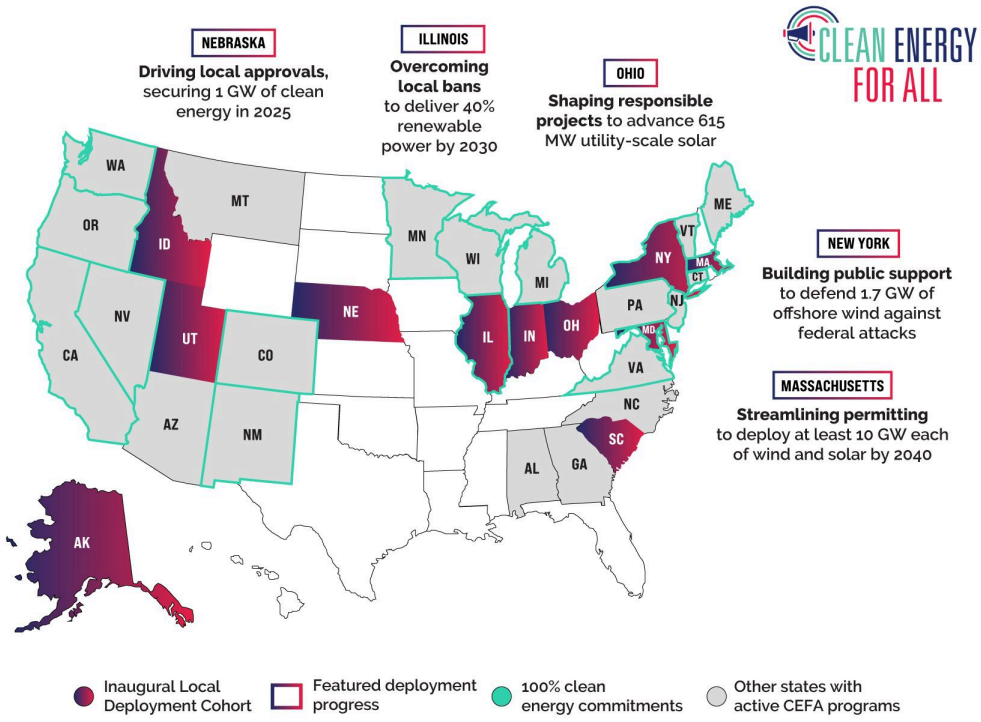
DRIVING CLEAN ENERGY DEPLOYMENT

Demand for electricity is surging nationwide, driven by rising load growth and a rapidly electrifying grid. Despite federal efforts to ban clean energy, renewables like solar and battery energy storage are the cheapest and quickest energy sources to deploy. League of Conservation Voters's Clean Energy For All (CEFA) program has been essential in building momentum, securing wins, and implementing landmark policies to drive the adoption of clean energy at scale. CEFA has grown its capacity to support LCV's over 30 state affiliates who collectively work-- to drive policies that build a clean energy future. Building on this progress, CEFA has grown its capacity to support states to drive policies and local approvals that put us on track to deploy an ambitious 70 GW of clean energy over the next five years to help meet our decarbonization goal, which will require more than doubling our annual clean energy deployment.

States are driving local clean energy deployment by:

- **Streamlining permitting** by advancing statewide standards, limiting punitive restrictions, and establishing firm deadlines and processes.
- **Overcoming local bans** that limit the development of new clean energy projects.
- **Driving local approvals** by securing favorable ordinances and decisions.
- **Building public support** through strategic education, grassroots organizing, and deep partnerships.
- **Shaping responsible projects** that protect conservation priorities, ensure local benefits, and require appropriate Tribal consultation.



Streamlining Permitting

While the urgency of clean energy deployment does not negate the need for thorough environmental reviews and robust community consultation, there are significant opportunities to streamline siting and permitting of renewable energy infrastructure. Communities across the country are working to balance the development of renewable energy with local concerns, and clear timelines can enhance transparency and ensure that we **cut red tape without cutting corners**.

📒 Massachusetts

Environmental League of Massachusetts (ELM) championed and helped shape the state's 2024 climate omnibus to modernize clean energy siting and permitting with a streamlined process that gives local governments authority over clean energy projects smaller than 25 MW and establishes statewide authority for projects over that threshold. As Massachusetts works toward full implementation of these reforms by July 2026, ELM is influencing the process to ensure that clean energy projects of all sizes are sited responsibly, evaluated transparently, and developed in partnership with host communities.

Responsible siting

Suitable project siting should reflect strong, science-based standards for health, environment, and safety. ELM is pushing the state to prioritize sites near existing grid infrastructure and to leverage existing rights-of-way, such as with the "Green Mile" – a 5 MW solar canopy planned along the Route 2 median in Lexington, MA. When it's not possible to avoid environmental impacts, responsible siting can be achieved through minimization and mitigation measures that enhance climate resilience, protect biodiversity, maintain natural and working lands, and consider cumulative impacts.

Transparency

The climate omnibus mandates development of a publicly accessible, real-time permitting dashboard for all clean energy projects proposed at the state and local levels, and establishes clear timelines for decisions. For large clean energy and grid projects, the Energy Facilities Siting Board will have 15 months to issue a consolidated permit comprising all necessary approvals. Municipalities have the option to either issue consolidated permits for smaller projects within 12 months or cede permitting authority to the statewide siting board.

Community benefits

Early engagement with host communities builds trust and understanding, helps identify and address potential concerns, and ensures that local voices are heard at a stage when feedback can influence project design. Robust community engagement is key to ensuring that clean energy developers follow through on their commitments to deliver tangible benefits to host communities, from reduced pollution to family-sustaining jobs and new tax revenue for schools and services. Accordingly, the Massachusetts reforms require developers to begin community engagement *before* filing permit applications and task the Office of Environmental Justice and Equity with developing guidelines and standards for community benefit plans.

Across the CVM:

- **New York League of Conservation Voters** advanced the 2024 RAPID Act to expand authority of the Office of Renewable Energy Siting and Electric Transmission (ORES) it helped establish in 2020 and create a streamlined, statewide permitting process for renewable energy infrastructure. The process includes dual tracks, in which local governments retain authority over smaller projects while larger projects are sited and permitted by ORES; uniform standards for environmental review and mitigation; intervenor compensation funds to support host community engagement; and expedited review that guarantees permit decisions within one year of completed applications. Regulations approved in February 2026 are expected to cut the permitting timeline in half.
- **Illinois Environmental Council** has continued to iterate on the 100% clean energy targets established in the state's 2021 Climate and Equitable Jobs Act (CEJA) by establishing guardrails for local zoning authority. Counties may not adopt requirements that exceed the state ceiling for certain setbacks or restrictions, and utility-scale wind and solar projects that meet state standards *must* be approved by local officials.

Overcoming Local Bans

Even where statewide clean energy commitments signal broad interest in building renewables, burdensome local regulations can create barriers to getting specific projects built. Today, nearly one-quarter of U.S. counties restrict renewables development through outright moratoriums or local ordinances establishing setbacks, viewsheds, decibel limits, or other arbitrary and unworkable regulations. Clean energy advocates are **pushing back through novel legislation, effective collaboration, and strategic partnerships**.

📒 Illinois

Recognizing that overburdensome local regulations were hindering statewide progress toward the state's ambitious climate goals, **Illinois Environmental Council** advanced the 2023 Renewable Energy Facilities Siting Act to establish guardrails on local restrictions and prohibit local bans. Counties and municipalities retain authority over local zoning, but are prohibited from adopting new rules more stringent than state standards and required to update existing ordinances to comply with the law.

Prior to the passage of Illinois's Siting Reform Law, at least 15 counties were identified as effectively banning or significantly hindering renewables. As of today, all of those counties have at least one renewable energy project queued to come online.

This success has not been without tensions. While some counties complied with the siting law by voluntarily amending local ordinances, others, such as Grundy County, refused to do so until forced to do so through

litigation. Grundy is the most extreme example, as the county was sued twice for denying special use permits. One of the cases went all the way to the appellate court.

- Buffalo Solar Farm is a 960-acre and >110 MW project that was rejected by the county board in September 2023. The developer, RWE Renewables, filed a lawsuit and won in March 2024. Following the lawsuit, the project began construction in the Fall of 2025.
- Equity Solar Illinois, a community solar project permit application, was denied by the county board in February 2024, and the developer filed its first suit in May 2024. Fast forward to March 2026, the Illinois Appellate Court for the Third District ruled in Equity Solar Illinois v. County of Grundy that the statute expressly states a permit "shall be approved" if the request complies with the standards, and that Grundy County had a nondiscretionary, statutory duty to issue those permits.

Updates in the sweeping 2025 Clean and Reliable Grid Affordability Act (CRGA) capped fees, removed other onerous requirements, and created a process at the state utility commission to speed up appeals that have been slowed by Illinois courts.

Across the CVM:

- **Indiana Conservation Voters** is collaborating with the Local Siting Table to build and maintain a database of local ordinances across the state's 92 counties. Although nearly 80% have enacted moratoriums on utility-scale renewables, a 2025 law limits local moratoriums to one year and creates new openings to work with communities. Leveraging the database to determine where local advocacy may be most effective is the key to securing more favorable ordinances and building clean energy projects that deliver for Hoosiers.

- **Conservation Voters for Idaho** is building effective partnerships and spearheading the establishment of a new organization of pro-renewables farmers who care about private property rights and value the economic development opportunities associated with clean energy. Their objections to restrictive solar ordinances and advocacy for favorable project approvals carries critical weight with decision makers.

Driving Local Approvals

At planning boards and county commissions across the country, difficult clean energy infrastructure approval processes are straining local resources, driving up project costs, and contributing to cancellations. Fossil-fuel interests are increasingly exploiting these processes to slow clean energy adoption, but **grassroots organizing, strategic education, and local electoral work are building support – and demand – for clean energy**.

📒 Nebraska

For more than ten years, **Nebraska Conservation Voters** (NCV) has led a strategic and victorious effort to steadily cultivate clean energy champions on the governing boards of Nebraska's largest electric utilities. In 2025, NCV led focused campaigns that successfully secured permits for more than 1 GW of clean energy in just one year.

Organizing

In 2025, NCV led 35 educational events, generated 376 constituent messages to county commissioners, and recruited dozens of people to speak at local meetings in support of clean energy. This grassroots organizing helped secure approvals for solar and battery storage facilities in priority counties:

- In Dakota County, the Mission Clean Energy Sternwheeler project – 360 MW solar, with potential to be paired with battery storage – was approved by the Board of Commissioners on a 4-1 vote. During the year leading up to the September 2025 vote, NCV held educational programs and worked to make sure Commissioners were hearing from community members supportive of the project.
- In Burt County, a 250 MW solar project was approved by the Board of Supervisors, 4-1-1-1 (4 support, 1 abstain, 1 oppose, 1 absent), after NCV's outreach and education generated positive comments and in-person testimonies.

Education

Recognizing that it takes technical expertise to navigate clean energy opportunities and concerns, NCV leads robust public and decisionmaker outreach in counties where renewables projects are proposed or viable. Sessions focus on the economic development and rural revitalization opportunities presented by clean energy and bring together critical stakeholders, including county commissioners, landowners, county economic development teams, energy developers, community groups, and coalition partners.

Local elections

By integrating local advocacy goals with local electoral opportunities, NCV has steadily secured a majority of clean energy supporters on some of Nebraska's most influential decision-making bodies. As a result, the governing boards of all three major electric utilities – together covering over 95% of Nebraska – are committed to decarbonizing their energy generation. One of those utilities, Lincoln Electric System, has since increased renewable energy to over half of its energy portfolio, while the other two utilities are on track to add over 2 GW of renewable energy.

Across the CVM:

- **Stewardship Utah Foundation** is driving demand for clean energy by expanding access to and participation in the state's Community Renewable Energy Program (CREP). The first-of-its-kind initiative enlists municipalities in driving large-scale renewable energy development by adopting resolutions to achieve net-100% renewable electricity by 2030 and collaborating with Rocky Mountain Power (RMP), Utah's largest utility, to meet those commitments. Participating customers in participating communities

pay a small monthly surcharge – set at $4 in a recent Public Service Commission decision – to supplement RMP's standard energy mix with renewable energy, and the program gradually acquires new clean energy resources to meet the rising demand. The initial cohort of 18 CREP communities represented one-quarter of RMP's customer base and was expected to drive development of 300-400 MW of new solar and wind by 2030, but in 2024, Stewardship Utah's advocacy secured a pathway for new communities to join the program. Stewardship Utah brought Midvale into the program, bringing the total to 19 communities, and is leading grassroots campaigns to enroll at least three new communities annually.

- Strong local ordinances set the parameters for evaluation of specific projects, and model ordinances that incorporate expert perspectives and encourage local customization give communities a place to start. **Conservation Voters of South Carolina Education Fund** collaborated with a host of stakeholders to develop a model solar and storage ordinance published by the U.S. Department of Energy-funded Carolinas Development and Assistance Siting Hub, which is capitalizing on its credibility to lead outreach and education for county officials. The ordinance was adopted by the first South Carolina community just a few months after its launch, demonstrating that county officials are interested in this guidance, especially on the decommissioning and financial assurance front.

Building Public Support

Too often, opposition voices dominate community conversations about clean energy deployment with misinformation, leaving would-be supporters confused about project costs and benefits – and quiet about local development. **Strategic education, grassroots organizing, and deep partnerships change the deployment landscape.** When people have ready access to accurate information from trusted messengers, they are more receptive to clean energy, more skeptical of fossil-fuel funded misinformation, and more willing to invest in – and support permitting of – necessary infrastructure.

📒 New York

In 2025, **New York League of Conservation Voters Education Fund** (NYLCVEF) launched a public education campaign across New York, with a focus on Long Island, to combat misinformation about offshore wind and demonstrate community support for clean energy infrastructure. Campaign coordination transitioned into effective mobilization when the Trump Administration issued a federal stop-work order on the Empire Wind 1 project in April. On Earth Day 2025, the NYLCVEF and its partners brought more than 100 supporters to the steps of the Nassau County Legislature in Mineola for a rally demanding the reversal of the order. Public demonstrations complemented NYLCV's media outreach and legal advocacy, and helped NYLCV and its allies successfully defend Empire Wind, getting construction – and the public education campaign – back underway.

Education

Myths and inaccuracies about offshore wind abound, and NYLCVEF prioritized ensuring that residents and decision-makers had access to scientifically accurate information, including a dedicated website, suite of fact sheets, and investment mapping tool, and teamed up with Climate Jobs NY on targeted ads highlighting the workforce benefits of offshore wind.

Organizing

Canvassers reached nearly 20,000 doors across Long Island, connecting with communities at the heart of New York's offshore wind conversation and answering concerns about workforce opportunities, visibility of turbines from shore, long-term reliability of offshore wind, environmental impacts on marine ecosystems, and more.

Partnerships

NYLCVEF leads the Wind Works NY coalition and prioritizes strengthening partnerships with groups that have deep ties to local communities — particularly those led by and serving communities of color and those most directly impacted by climate change. In 2025, NYLEVEF invested $50,000 in subgrants to support youth, labor, community, and faith-based organizations. Collectively, partners participated in more than 50 community events and gathered more than 14,000 signatures in support of wind energy. Those signatures were delivered to Governor Hochul in December 2025.

Across the CVM:

LCV's local deployment program originated in a transformative partnership with Climate Jobs National Resource Center. Initially focused on establishing state tables as centers of gravity for offshore wind advocacy in key coastal communities, this collaboration sparked locally-led campaigns that are maintaining offshore wind momentum in the face of federal attacks – and creating a model for coordinated efforts to meaningfully increase clean energy support among community and elected leaders.

- Up and down the East Coast, the CVM is anchoring strong pro-wind coalitions: **Environmental League of Massachusetts** convenes New England for Offshore Wind, **New York LCV** co-chairs Wind Works New York, **New Jersey LCV** leads NJ Wind Works, and **Maryland LCV** facilitates the Offshore Wind Alliance. These multi-sector, collaborative tables reflect their communities and work together – from comment letters to collective action and toolkits to talking points – to combat misinformation, amplify the benefits of offshore wind, and do everything possible to ensure completion of the five fully-permitted offshore wind projects now under construction.

Shaping Responsible Projects

Thoughtfully developed renewables projects are critical to reaching the ambitious and necessary target of deploying 70 GW of clean energy over the next five years. Not only are they more readily able to earn public

support and critical approvals, responsible projects can complement conservation priorities, sustain family farms, and begin to repair past and current harms to sovereign Tribal Nations. While science demands a rapid response to the climate crisis, *justice* demands that **the clean energy transition must also be accountable to the local communities, economies, and ecosystems we strive to protect**.

📒 Ohio

The **Ohio Environmental Council** (OEC) holds a high bar for intervention on behalf of proposed solar projects at the Ohio Power Siting Board. Projects are assessed against the OEC's internal Solar Justice Scorecard to inform its legal advocacy, including the conditions it pushes developers to meet, and public education.

Project evaluation

The OEC's Solar Justice Scorecard evaluates proposed utility scale solar projects in categories such as site selection, community engagement and benefits, and employment opportunities and standards, both to evaluate their initial design and to identify opportunities for improvement. Public sentiment figures in, too, and projects with strong support, little local opposition, and good scores may not get the same attention as those that need shaping and advocacy.

Legal advocacy

The Scorecard helped the OEC achieve multiple provisions around preservation of land and water resources in stipulations on recent projects, including commitments tied to more careful "spot treatment" of herbicides and extra conditions around drainage tile repair in the Crossroads Solar and Carnation Solar cases.

While those projects are still pending, outcomes for the fully-permitted Frasier Solar demonstrate the OEC's influence. The 120 MW agrivoltaic project will use sheep grazing for vegetation management at the project site, modeling how clean energy can support both the environment and the rural economy, while making the electric grid more reliable.

- During evidentiary hearings at the Ohio Power Siting Board, the OEC exposed connections between an opposition group and fossil fuel interests. Since then, more reporting has exposed more connections.
- The OEC submitted expert testimony finding that, at the public hearing, 56% of opposition positions were not supported by the facts in the record.
- The OEC also submitted expert testimony on the potential costs of climate change in Knox County and how the project will help mitigate climate change.
- Through settlement negotiations, the OEC ensured conditions designed to minimize and mitigate environmental impacts to nearby wetlands, including drainage tile repair.

Although Frasier Solar was approved by the Ohio Power Siting Board in June 2025, an opposition group appealed the project's approval to the Ohio Supreme Court. The OEC has filed an amicus brief supporting the broad public interest analysis that carefully considers the substance of arguments for or against projects, not just the quantity of support or opposition.

Education

In 2026, OEC continues to guide its solar advocacy through its Solar Justice Scorecard and solar trends website. The OEC's website provides the public and host communities with accessible project summaries, factual information, and opportunities to meaningfully engage in discussions about project design and potential improvements. The solar justice principles embodied in the internal scorecard influence the public-facing work and litigation strategy to encourage developers to adopt best practices and help signal expectations for high-quality projects.

Across the CVM:

- Maryland's Renewable Energy Certainty Act (RECA) (SB 931, July 2025) represents a breakthrough compromise in preserving agricultural heritage while advancing clean energy. Championed by **Maryland League of Conservation Voters** over several years of stakeholder negotiations and legislative advocacy, the law establishes strict environmental safeguards for solar development and guarantees that 95% of Maryland's priority farms and scenic landscapes remain intact for generations. The law also streamlines project approvals by giving local governments a standard process for reviewing solar energy systems under 5 MW and removing the need for conditional use approval for most projects between 1 MW and 5 MW. State officials expect more than two-thirds of community solar projects to opt into the standard siting and licensing requirements once they are finalized this spring. Even now, before RECA is fully implemented and while federal attacks depress solar development in many markets, solar project proposals in Maryland have increased 1000% in recent years.
- Local clean energy deployment presents real economic development opportunities for Tribal Nations, and **The Alaska Center Education Fund** supported the Knik Tribe's application for a grant to evaluate the technical and economic viability of wind and solar energy, in conjunction with energy storage. Funding through the state-operated Renewable Energy Fund will support modeling of up to five sites, consideration of conventional and alternative ownership structures, development of a permitting roadmap, and generation of conceptual designs.

The CVM difference:

Through the Clean Energy for All campaign, the League of Conservation Voters (LCV) and our 30 state affiliates (together, the Conservation Voters Movement, or CVM) have grown and mobilized grassroots power into a strong and strategic movement. Skilled advocacy, deep partnerships, and unparalleled local knowledge position CVM leaders to chart paths that fit their unique landscapes, from statewide commitments to 100% clean energy (16 states) or carbon neutrality (3 states), to regulatory engagement that speeds clean energy and drives retirements of fossil fuel infrastructure, to coordinated deployment campaigns that make sure necessary clean energy infrastructure actually gets built. By leveraging the CVM's unique ability to build, execute, and replicate large-scale campaigns that combine deep policy

expertise with strategic education, savvy grassroots campaigns, and deep partnerships, **the CVM is delivering clean energy for all.**