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STATE LEGISLATORS HEATING UP THE DEBATE OVER GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS

[Natural Resource \(/full-blog/category/Natural+Resource\)](#)

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In wake of President Trump's stance on global warming and greenhouse gas emissions, some states have taken it upon themselves to introduce legislation that would curb greenhouse gas emissions by taxing fossil fuel products and emissions.^[i] Massachusetts is at the forefront of the state based carbon taxing proposals proposals is Massachusetts.^[ii] Senate Bill 1821, if passed, would impose a fee on the distribution or sale of greenhouse gas emitting matter.^[iii]

While Massachusetts would be the first state to implement a carbon tax, Senate Bill 1821 is much like—if not identical to—the successful carbon tax that has been in place in the Canadian province of British Columbia.^[iv] In 2008, British Columbia established a carbon tax.^[v] In 2008, British Columbia measured their greenhouse gas emissions at 61 million metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent.^[vi] In 2014, their measured greenhouse gas emissions were 58 million metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent.^[vii] Between 2008 and 2014, greenhouse emissions decreased by 5.5% in British Columbia.^[viii] While 5.5% decrease in greenhouse gases may not seem like very much, that amount is rather staggering when compared to greenhouse emissions of Massachusetts.



http://www.steamenginevolution.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/Coal-Fired-Power-Plant_in-USA_Kentucky.jpg

In 2014, Massachusetts greenhouse gas emissions were measured at 63.9 million metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent.^[ix] Assuming greenhouse gas emissions would be reduced by 5.5% over a 6- year period, like in British Columbia, it could be estimated that Massachusetts would have a greenhouse gas emission of 60.4 million metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent; a difference decrease of 3.5 million metric tons byin 2020.^[x]

There are four other states—Connecticut, Rhode Island, Vermont, and Washington—that have proposed similar legislation.^[xi] If all five states with the proposed bills were to implement the carbon tax, collectively, they would reduce greenhouse gas emissions by a whopping 10.3 million metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent.^[xii] In the aggregate, the implementation of the British Columbia's carbon tax regulation would be greatly effective in reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Because of the values determined, the five states should implement the proposed system.

[i] Chelsea Harvey, *Defying Trump, These State Leaders Aare Ttrying to l impose Their Own Ccarbon Taxes*, The Wash.ington Post (May 31, 2017), https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/energy-environment/wp/2017/05/12/defying-trump-these-state-leaders-are-trying-to-impose-their-own-carbon-taxes/?utm_source=rss_energy-environment&utm_term=.1f6640f6be70.

[ii] *Id.*

[iii] S.B. 1821, 190th Gen. Court, Reg. Sess. (Mass. 2017).

[iv] *Compare* S.B. 1821, 190th Gen. Court, Reg. Sess. (Mass. 2017) *with British Columbia's Revenue-Neutral Carbon Tax*, Province of British Columbia, <http://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/environment/climate-change/planning-and-action/carbon-tax> (last visited May 31, 2017).

[v] *British Columbia's Revenue-Neutral Carbon Tax*, Province of British Columbia, <http://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/environment/climate-change/planning-and-action/carbon-tax> (last visited May 31, 2017).

[vi] *Trends in Greenhouse Gas Emissions in B.C.*, Province of British Columbia, <http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/soe/indicators/sustainability/ghg-emissions.html> (last visited May 31, 2017).

[vii] *Id.*

[viii] *Id.*

[ix] *State Energy-Related Carbon Dioxide Emissions by Year*, US Energy Info. Admin. (Jan. 2017), <https://www.eia.gov/environment/emissions/state/analysis/pdf/table1.pdf>.

[x] *Id.* (Six years, the length of time data is available for British Columbia, from the available data is 2020 and was thus used for the calculation).

[xi] Harvey, *supra* note i1.

[xii] *State Energy-Related Carbon Dioxide Emissions by Year*, US Energy Info. Admin. (Jan. 2017), <https://www.eia.gov/environment/emissions/state/analysis/pdf/table1.pdf> (The following 2014 values were used in determining the 5.5% of emissions for all five states: Connecticut was 35.1 million metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent; Rhode Island was 10.6 million metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent; Vermont was 5.9 million metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent; and Washington was 73.4 million metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent. Each number was multiplied by 5.5% then all values, including Massachusetts, were added together to determine the total.).

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