

August 2, 2017

The Honorable Terry McAuliffe
Office of the Governor
Patrick Henry Building
1111 East Broad Street
Richmond, VA 23219

Dear Governor McAuliffe,

On behalf of the 53 organizations, businesses and individuals signed below, we urge you to take the steps that will enable Virginia to capture the immense wind energy resource off our shores.

Climate change poses an urgent threat to coastal and low-lying communities, particularly in Virginia. The state has seen the highest sea level rise of any state along the East Coast, and the Hampton Roads area is second only to New Orleans in its vulnerability to sea level rise. The risk that sea level rise and storm surges pose to valuable development along Virginia's coastline, including military installations that drive Virginia's coastal economy, highlights the urgent need for investments in clean, carbon-free energy sources.

Controlling carbon pollution and investing in renewable energy sources are critical for addressing climate change. We commend you for taking the next step to reduce carbon emissions in the electric power sector through your recently announced Clean Energy Virginia Initiative. Through increased investments in renewable energy, Virginia is poised to be both an environmental and economic leader. A critical piece of the Commonwealth's plan to advance climate action should be to capture the clean energy found in our offshore winds.

Virginia is primed for development of offshore wind resources. The 113,000 acre Wind Energy Area has been leased to Dominion Energy for development. However, state-level action is needed to incentivize the development of this clean energy source. Moving forward, Virginia's policies must encourage and reward the upfront investment needed to secure this zero-fuel cost energy. Other states are already successfully advancing strong offshore development plans. Massachusetts and New York have now made the largest commitments to offshore wind in the country at 1,600 megawatts (MW) and 2,400 MW, respectively.

We commend you for helping to advance the 12 MW pilot project in the Virginia Research Lease adjacent to the Wind Energy Area. The recently announced Dominion partnership with Dong Energy is welcome news and we expect that initial project to facilitate the development of the larger project.

Investing in this pollution-free resource can both reduce carbon emissions and boost our local economies. And because offshore wind can blow strongest during times of peak energy demand – afternoons and winter cold snaps – it can diversify our energy portfolio with large amounts of valuable, clean power just when we need it most.

Countries around the world are already reaping the economic and environmental benefits of offshore wind power. In Europe, this booming industry currently supports 70,000 long-term, quality jobs. The first offshore wind farm in the United States, the Block Island Wind Farm, created 300 jobs and will save Block Island residents as much as 40 percent on electricity bills.

State leaders play a critical role in advancing offshore wind power. The federal government working with the State has identified an appropriate location for offshore wind development. We call on you to commit to the following actions to help Virginia realize the golden opportunity on our horizon:

- Set a near term target for substantial development of the Virginia Wind Energy Area.
- Advance policies that ensure a competitive market for offshore wind power.
- Support cost recovery for offshore wind investment.
- Work with the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) to ensure an efficient, transparent and environmentally responsible offshore wind development process that protects wildlife, particularly endangered marine mammals like the North Atlantic Right Whale, and sea turtles.
- Invest in key research, initiatives and infrastructure needed to spur offshore wind development.
- Recruit an offshore wind OEM manufacturer to open a Hampton Roads facility, providing service to Virginia and our neighbors, and jobs to residents of the Commonwealth's most populous area.

Virginia's citizens, businesses and environment are depending on you for bold leadership in ensuring a clean energy future. We strongly urge you to recognize just how much we have to gain from harnessing our offshore wind power potential in a manner that protects wildlife and their habitats. For the sake of coastal resiliency, local jobs, increased investments in economic development and manufacturing and future generations, we thank you for your commitment to this clean energy solution, and look forward to working with you to bring this transformational new power source online.

Sincerely,

Conservation Groups

Chesapeake Pipeline Resistance

Environment Virginia

Lynnhaven River NOW

Moms Clean Air Force

Mothers Out Front

National Wildlife Federation

National Hispanic Medical Association

Natural Resources Defense Council

Rappahannock League for Environmental Protection

Shenandoah Valley Network

Sierra Club Virginia Chapter

Southern Alliance for Clean Energy

Southern Environmental Law Center

Southern Wind Energy Association
Virginia Clinicians For Climate Action
Virginia Conservation Network

Elected Officials

Mayor McKinley Price - Newport News
Senator Adam Ebbin - 30th District
Senator Barbara Favola - 31st District
Senator David Marsden - 37th District
Senator Lynwood Lewis - 100th District
Senator Mamie Locke - 2nd District
Senator Scott Surovell - 36th District
Delegate Alfonso Lopez - 49th District
Delegate David Bulova - 37th District
Delegate Jennifer Boysko - 86th District
Delegate Kaye Kory - 38th District
Delegate Ken Plum - 36th District
Delegate Mark Levine - 45th District
Delegate Patrick Hope - 47th District
Delegate Rip Sullivan - 48th District
Delegate Sam Rasoul - 11th District
Delegate Vivian Watts - 39th District
Andrew Kohen - Harrisonburg School Board Chairman
Kristin Szakos - Charlottesville City Council Member
Margaret Ward - Falls Church School Board Member

Businesses

Addison Handmade & Vintage, Richmond
ATSte of France, Norfolk
Bear in Mind Strategies, Norfolk
Chop Suey Books, Richmond
Circle Square Salon, Richmond
Croc's 19th Street Bistro, Norfolk
Fan Guitar and Ukulele, Richmond
Knight's Gambit Vineyards, Charlottesville
Richmond Re-cycles
Shenandoah Energy Services, Edinburg
SolarMill, Henrico
Virtue Solar, Madison
Yesterday's Heroes, Richmond

Academics and Health Professionals

Jerome Paulson, MD - George Washington University
Mona Sarfaty, MD MPH - Director, Program on Climate and Health
Scott Bye - Old Dominion University

Richard Hood, MD - Ear, Nose and Throat Ltd