



## Lutheran Advocacy - Minnesota

*As a reconciling and healing presence, this church...strives to pioneer new ways of addressing emerging social problems and environmental degradation. This church has a responsibility...to advocate just and peaceful resolutions... It should support institutions and policies that serve the common good and work with and learn from others in caring for and changing global society.*

*-- From The Church in Society: A Lutheran Perspective (ELCA Social Statement)*

---

## Minnesota Legislative Session – 2023

### Clean Energy/Climate Crisis Mitigation

***\*Please be in contact with Tammy if you'd like the full summary with the Affordable Housing/Homelessness wins listed***

**100% Clean Energy Standard:** Establishes the goal to ***achieve a transition to 100% clean electricity in Minnesota by 2040***. This passed as a stand-alone bill within just a few weeks at the beginning of the legislative session. LA-MN has been working on Clean Energy Standards since early in the days of my predecessor. He was engaged in the 2007 legislation which set the Renewable Energy Standard (RES) at 25% renewable electricity statewide by 2025, with 30% for Xcel. We reached that goal 4-5 years ago, many years ahead of schedule. Along with coalition partners, we've been trying to improve the RES since I arrived at LA-MN in 2014.

**Minnesota State Competitiveness Fund:** We were very concerned last year when legislation wasn't passed to provide matches to receive federal funding through the Bipartisan Infrastructure Act (and later the Inflation Reduction Act). Although we missed a few opportunities, mid-session the legislature created a ***fund of \$190 million to leverage federal funding*** (funding is also included in other bills like Transportation, that increases amounts for federal matches).

**Environment, Natural Resources, Climate, & Energy Omnibus:** This was a massive bill which combined many pieces of legislation and covered various department budgets, in addition to addressing the climate crisis and transition to a clean energy economy. We worked on pieces relating to clean energy and the climate crisis.

- **Next Generation Climate Act:** This ***updates*** the state greenhouse gas ***emissions reduction goals*** first established in the 2007 Next Generation Energy Act to match current science. It establishes a ***50% reduction target (on a 2005 base) by 2030*** and a net ***zero target by 2050***. We worked on this last year, and pushed hard for it again at the end of this session when it looked like it was going to be left out of the final omnibus bill.
- **Energy Transition (MnCIFA):** The ***Minnesota Climate Innovation Finance Authority (MnCIFA)*** was established to ***help workers and communities transition to the clean energy economy***. It prioritizes low-income communities, BIPOC\* communities, and workers/communities experiencing significant changes in the transition (like where a power plant is closed). [\*BIPOC refers to Black, Indigenous, People

of Color.] It also helps bolster climate solutions that benefit everyone. MnCIFA ***needed adequate funding to leverage other funding sources***, and in the end got \$45 million (\$20 million from the Environment Omnibus bill and \$25 million in the Economic Development/Jobs Omnibus). We joined with Minnesota Interfaith Power and Light (MNIPL) and other partners toward the end of session to address this opportunity.

- **Energy Transition (Energy Transition Office):** When the session started, we thought this new office (created in 2021) would need additional funding and staff to do what MnCIFA is now set up to do. The Energy Transition Office got a small increase in funding. I assume it will likely continue help communities do feasibility studies and assess needs, while MnCIFA does the heavy lifting.
- **Pre-weatherization for Low-Income Homeowners.:** Many low-income families are ***not eligible for assistance to weatherize*** their homes ***due to other structural issues***. This program, which we worked on last year with some housing and environmental partners, was included this year to ***help address the barriers that keep people from being able to weatherize their homes***.
- **Various Projects & Programs:** Included in the omnibus bill were heat pump incentives, residential electric panel upgrade incentives, energy storage incentives, ***Community Solar Garden improvements***, an expansion of Solar on Schools, ending Homeowner Association bans on rooftop solar, establishment of Solar on Public Buildings, ***expansion of the Solar Rewards Program***, creation of a school HVAC Upgrade Program, the creation of a Distributed Solar Energy Standard for Utilities, Distributed Energy Upgrade Grants, ordering the creation of a Utility Energy Storage System, ***Electric Grid Resiliency Grants***, a high voltage transmission line in Northern Minnesota, allowing power line siting along public highways (to prevent appropriation of land from Minnesota residents), ***Drinking Water Lead Pipe replacement***, Xcel required to plan for Allen S. King ***Coal Plant Decommissioning***, Electric Utility Transition Aid to local governments, increased annual payments to Prairie Island Indian Community for nuclear waste storage, ***MN Iron Ore Battery Storage Feasibility Study***, natural gas price gouging rebates, consumer access to energy use data, requirement of ***Cumulative Impacts Analysis*** for new & ongoing pollution permits in low-income/BIPOC/Environmental Justice Communities (so that if a community already has polluters and other projects or plants are looking to be built in close proximity, they can't just do an environmental impact study for the new entity, but must consider the impact of what it adds on top of what already exists in the community), and more. ***Many of these items had passed previously in the Minnesota House, but never reached final passage until this year.*** (Interestingly, utilities were in favor of these items impacting them, and no utilities worked to oppose them this year).

### **Other Areas Impacting Climate Mitigation/Adaptation/Solutions (in various bills):**

Aside from ***previous work and/or support of cover crops, the Forever Green Program, and Soil Health programs***, Lutheran Advocacy-MN has not worked on any of these issues. Many of the programs listed below already exist and are getting some funding increases, others have passed either the MN House or Senate previously but did not get full final passage until this year, and some are new. I'm including this detail for the people who keep asking what happened for the climate in various other areas/sectors.

- **Agriculture/Land Conservation: Soil Health Financial Assistance** Program & Grants, Agriculture Best Practices Loan Program, expansion of ***Cover Crop incentives*** for Landowners, Soil Health Equipment Grants, ***Forever Green Research*** at the University of Minnesota (for things like Kernza, a perennial wheat hybrid), Deep Winter Greenhouse Program, Conservation Reserve Program, Reinvest in Minnesota Program, new funding for Climate-Related Land Conservation, addition of farmlands to PACE Program, Green Fertilizer Production Facilities investment.
- **Natural Environment Protection, Enhancement, or Improvement:** Grasslands Protection Carbon Sequestration, Peatland Protection Carbon Sequestration, ***Lawns to Legumes*** Program expansion, Habitat Enhancement Landscape Program, establishment of Habitat Friendly Utilities Program, ***Highways for Habitat program*** implementation, Private Forest Landowner Assistance, Community Tree Planting Grants, Planting Tomorrow's Forests Today program, State Forest Reforestation, Emerald Ash Borer Tree Replacement, ReLeaf Program, Accelerated Tree Seed Collection, Lowland Conifer Reserve Program Study.
- **Climate Action Planning, Adaptation, & Resilience:** Local Climate Action Planning Grants, Small Communities Partnership Grants, Clean Energy Resource Teams, Creating Resilient Communities grants for

local governments, GreenStep Cities, Tribal Advocacy Council on Energy, Climate Pathways Analysis funding for State Decarbonization Planning, creation of Agriculture Department Climate Implementation Coordinator, Health Department Climate & Public Health Program staff funding, Disaster Assistance Contingency Account, additional investments in wildfire aviation infrastructure, flood mitigation, living snow fences, Weather Ready Program expansion at the University of Minnesota, Climate-Related Planning requirement in Metro Area Comprehensive Plans.

- **Workforce Development:** Growing Clean Economy Apprenticeships, Clean Economy Equitable Workforce program, Environmental Careers Pathway Program, North Minneapolis Rise Up Center, Minnesota GreenCorp, Tribal construction workforce training programs, Expanding Equity in Apprenticeship (LEAP Grants), requiring prevailing wages for clean energy investments, Utility Diversity Reporting Requirements strengthened, Building Strong Communities Program.
- **Residential Housing/Commercial Bldg Climate Resiliency:** Strengthen Minnesota Homes Program to prepare homes for high wind & hail events, Commercial Building Code updates, establishment of Commercial Building Benchmarking Program, Climate Impacts on Public Buildings Study, addition of Climate Resiliency to Minnesota's Sustainable Building Guidelines.
- **Air Pollution:** Community Air Monitoring expansion, Metro Air Toxics Emissions Reporting, Industrial Facility Air Toxics & Criteria Air Emission Reduction Grants, strengthening of air emissions permitting, air compliance equipment investments, establishment of Odor Management Program for Metro facilities, dedication of 40% of large Pollution Control Agency Settlement to community health boards.
- **Waste Reduction:** Waste Prevention & Reduction Grants/Loans, expansion of local recycling programs, Olmsted County Waste Diversion Improvements, small businesses pollution prevention acceleration, Digital Fair Repair Consumer Protections (more repairs, less waste of electronics), Biodegradable & Compostable Product Labeling Standards, Statewide Zero Waste Study, Solar Energy Equipment End of Life Management Study.
- **Transportation:** dedicated Metro Transit Funding, expansion of Metro Area Transit bonding authority, Northern Lights Express Passenger Train, Greater Minnesota transit investments, Bus Rapid Transit expansion, Blue Line Train extension, Passenger Rail to Chicago increase, Highway 169 Bus Rapid Transit, Intercity Passenger Rail Planning requirement, Northstar Commuter Rail Study, Transit Fair Elimination Pilot Program, Utility Transportation Electrification Planning requirement, bringing of National EV Infrastructure (NEVI) Program to Minnesota, Electric School Bus Program, electric vehicle incentives, state vehicle fleets Preference for EVs, EV Dealer Training requirement & funding, requirement of MNDOT to set Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Reduction Targets, GHG Emissions Impact Mitigation Working Group creation, MSP Airport Progress Reports regarding 80% GHG reductions by 2030 goal, Clean Fuel Standard Working Group, Train Derailment Emergency Response Preparedness, Sustainable Aviation Fuel Credit funding.
- **Bonding & Cash Infrastructure:** There were a number of climate related infrastructure projects in the bills that were negotiated on the last day. I recall from earlier in the session that a number of communities were asking for bonds to help in *updating or rebuilding storm systems* to manage the deluges we now get from extreme rain events. Maybe someday I'll get the chance to go through the bills carefully.