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Gov. Shapiro unveiled his Lightning Plan. What is it? What does it mean for PA?

Susquehanna University Mark Dixon Staff | TPIN

Last month, Gov. Shapiro unveiled his “Lightning Plan” at a news conference in York County. But what is it and what could it mean for Pennsylvania?

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CLEAN ENERGY

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In a nod to Pennsylvania's home-state hero Ben Franklin and his legendary kite flying exploits, Governor Shapiro announced his "Lightning Plan" standing alongside environmental, business and labor leaders last month.

When taking a closer look beyond the plan's powerful and strong marketing moniker, it's clear that the governor's Lightning Plan is meant to be a blueprint for a statewide energy plan for Pennsylvania.

Politically and substantively it makes sense that Gov. Shapiro would want to proactively lead on energy issues. The Keystone State has a longstanding history in U.S. energy production. And energy prices are a kitchen table issue that's regularly on the public's mind—especially when the price goes up and consumers feel the strain of higher electricity bills. Plus, both federal and state-level officials are always getting needed for not having a clear energy plan (especially when prices increase).



Gov. Shapiro's Lightning Plan would help more schools go solar like Susquehanna University.

What is Gov. Shapiro's Lightning Plan?

So putting a statewide energy plan forward makes sense. The governor's announced plan has six distinct legislative planks to it. They include:

- Legislation to increase requirements for the amount of clean, renewable energy that utility companies must supply in Pennsylvania. This proposal is called the Pennsylvania Reliable Energy Sustainability Standard (PRESS) and was also introduced into the general assembly last session. This year's lead sponsors are the same as last session, state Senator [Steve Santarsiero in the state Senate](#), and State Representative [Danielle Friel Otten in the state House](#);
- Expanding the state's cornerstone energy conservation law (often referred to just as "Act 129" in policy wonk circles), to reduce energy consumption and save Pennsylvanians money on their utility bills. This legislation is being introduced by State Senator

[Lisa Boscola in the Senate](#) and State Representative [Kyle Donahue in the state House](#);

- Creating a “polluter pays” program to make Pennsylvania’s largest global warming polluters pay for the climate pollution they release. This proposal was also introduced in last year’s legislation session and is called the Pennsylvania Climate Emissions Reduction Act (PACER). The legislation has the same lead sponsors as last session: state Senator [Carolyn Comitta in the state senate](#) and state Representative [Aerion Abney in the state House](#);
- Streamlining the process for energy projects like wind and solar to come online faster in order to help deliver more clean energy. This legislation is called the Reliable Energy Siting and Electric Transition legislation (RESET), and is being introduced by State Senator [John Kane in the state Senate](#) and state Representative [Mandy Steele in the state house](#);
- Creating a “community energy” program that would help Pennsylvanians who can’t invest in their own renewable energy projects (like a Pennsylvanian who is a renter and lives in an apartment building in Philadelphia) or can’t afford the cost of going solar on their own, to be able to access and jointly share these types of energy sources. This proposal is being introduced by state Senator [Judy Schwank in the state Senate](#) and state Representative [Peter Schweyer in the state House](#);
- Creating a set of tax breaks and subsidies for various types of energy projects, to the tune of hundreds of millions of dollars. This legislation is called the Pennsylvania Economic Development for a Growing Economy (PA EDGE) Tax Credit Program, and is being introduced by state Senator [Nick Piscitanno](#) and State Representative [John Inglis](#).

In order to get implemented in Pennsylvania, all of these proposals would first need to get passed by the state’s general assembly and then sent to Gov. Shapiro to sign into law.



Gov. Shapiro's Lightning Plan would put a price on global warming pollution from dirty power plants.

What does Gov. Shapiro's Lightning Plan mean for Pa?

If implemented as proposed by the governor and his legislative sponsors, the Lightning Plan could be a much-needed shot in the arm for renewable energy and energy conservation in Pennsylvania and put the Keystone State on the path towards a new, cleaner energy future.

This is particularly critical since [Pennsylvania currently ranks a dismal 48th in the nation for growth in renewable energy](#), while also having the fourth largest carbon footprint of any state in the U.S.

If fully enacted, the Lightning Plan would:

- Require utility companies supplying electricity in Pennsylvania to get at least 35% of the energy from renewable energy sources like wind and solar power. This is more than a four-fold increase from the state's current requirement for renewable energy production;
- Update Pennsylvania's energy conservation law, which hasn't been updated since its inception in 2008. Yet this groundbreaking program has already saved Pennsylvania residents and businesses a whopping \$9 billion. It makes sense when you think that the cheapest, cleanest energy is the energy that you don't need to produce in the first place, so reducing energy consumption matters.
- Cap and put a price on global warming pollution from dirty power plants, and then reduce those caps each year so that our air keeps getting cleaner and cleaner.
- Streamline the process for bringing new, clean energy projects online. Currently, Pennsylvania is one of only 12 states that don't have a statewide law to address energy siting issues within its state borders.



Congressman Ryan Mackenzie, Rep. Milou Mackenzie, Black River Farms Owners, PennEnvironment Staff and Lehigh Valley locals gathered for a photo in front of the solar farm

When you put it all together, the new energy plan put forth by Gov. Shapiro can help put Pennsylvania on the path of being a clean energy leader, instead of a clean energy laggard.

If we want to tackle air and climate pollution and help keep our electricity bills down, it's critical that Pennsylvania move away from dirty energy sources like burning coal and fracked gas, and instead lean into clean energy alternatives like wind, solar and energy conservation.

With leadership lagging at the federal level, it's more crucial than ever that our elected leaders in Harrisburg take up the mantle and help make Pennsylvania a clean energy leader. Hopefully members of the state legislature can push beyond the current hyperpartisanship and get behind this commonsense blueprint to promote clean, affordable, reliable energy for all of Pennsylvania's residents.

Only then can we build the momentum needed to implement solutions that will leave a climate-safe planet for our kids, grandchildren and future generations.



SOLAR POWER

Support Gov. Shapiro's clean energy plan

Ask your state legislators to support the Governor's Clean Energy Plan today.

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As executive director, David spearheads the issue advocacy, civic engagement campaigns, and long-term organizational building for PennEnvironment. David's areas of expertise include fracking, global warming, environmental enforcement

and litigation, and clean energy and lead in school drinking water policy. He also oversees PennPIRG and other organizations within The Public Interest Network that are engaged in social change across Pennsylvania. David has served on the environmental transition teams for Govs. Josh Shapiro and Tom Wolf, and Philadelphia Mayors Cherielle Parker and Jim Kenney. He was also recognized in the 2023 Pennsylvania Government Relations Power 100. Under David's leadership, PennEnvironment has won the two largest citizen suit penalties in Pennsylvania history against illegal polluters under the federal Clean Water Act as well as the two largest citizen suit penalties under the federal Clean Air Act in state history.

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