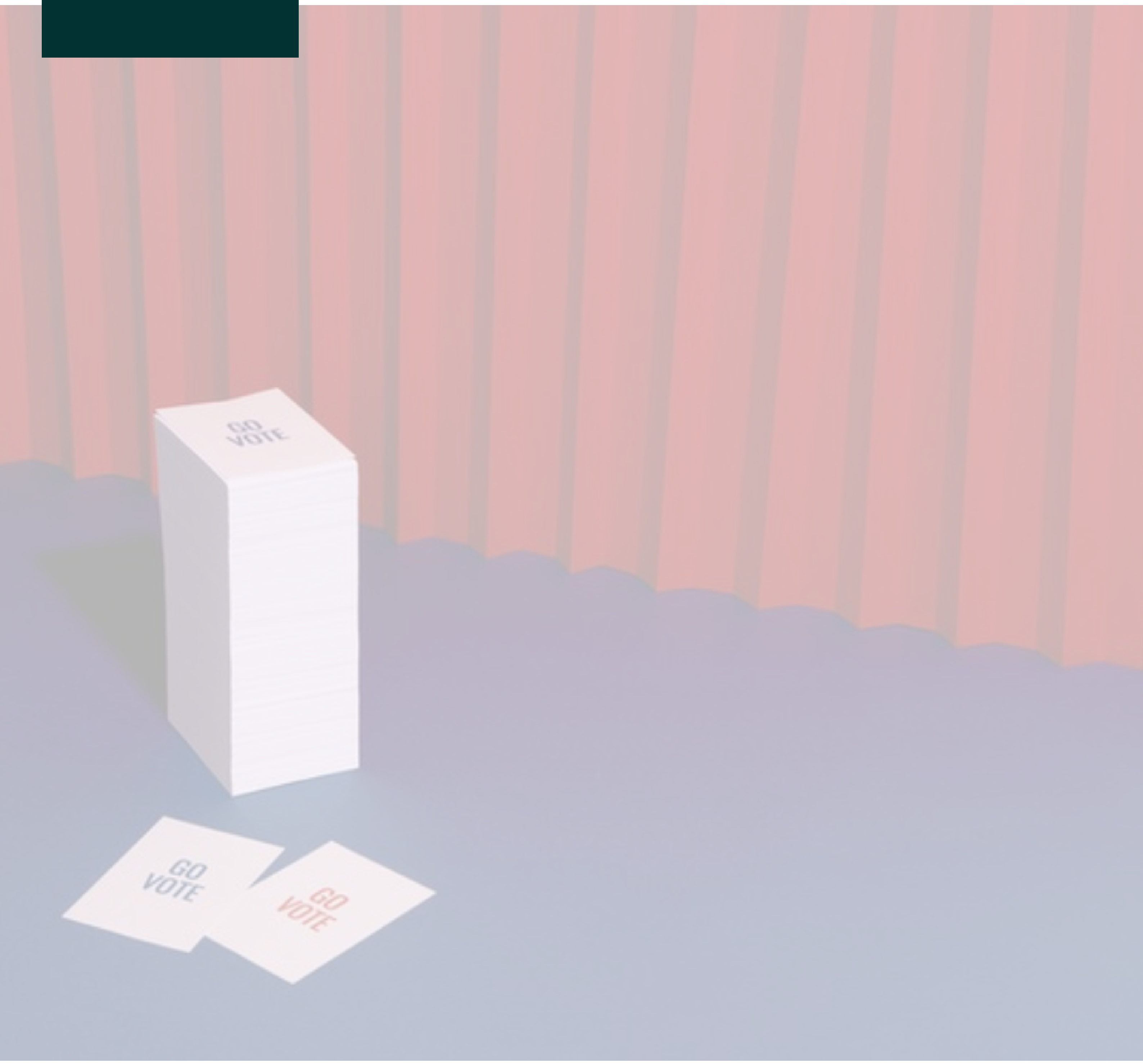
SHALLOW DIVES

STATE LEGISLATIVE ADVOCACY



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In 2020, Giving Green focused its US Policy Change research on national-level policy. However, historically in the US there has been limited progress on pro-climate policy at the federal level. With an incoming Biden administration, climate campaigners are optimistic about federal climate policy. But given likely composition of the Senate, this will limit the extent of climate legislation that can realistically pass.

In absence of national-level policy frameworks regulating greenhouse gas emissions in the United States, state-level policy change may be an especially appealing alternative. Political conditions in some states may be much more amenable to significant policy change than the national government. State-level policy can affect important elements of emissions, such as by mandating the amount of renewable energy in a state's electricity generation mix.

In this document, we share the beginning of our research into state-level organizations, which we intend to continue in 2021. We present a series of "shallow-dives" completed by our team into a select group of organizations that use a variety of methods to influence climate policy at the level of individual states or regions.

These represent our initial research into each organization, which we used to determine which organizations should receive detailed "deep-dive" analysis by our team.

This document is a work-in-progress, and does not represent our complete list of organizations working on state-level or regional policy change that we intend to conduct shallow-dive analysis of. In 2020, we did not have time to do deep dives on promising organizations, but we plan to do so in 2021.

Overall, our approach for state- and region-focused organizations is similar to our process outlined in the document Giving Green's Approach to Policy Change Recommendations. The core of our analysis involves collecting a long-list of organizations based on our own search and expert interviews, then short-listing a group of organizations for a "shallow-dive" analysis, followed by a deep-dive analysis of the organizations we think have the most potential for achieving impact, defined as shifting policy in a way that meaningfully reduces atmospheric greenhouse gas concentrations. In the context of state-level policy, our process will differ slightly.

We will consider the overall emissions profile and political conditions of the state(s) each organization works in. The population of US states varies widely, as does total and per capita emissions and the industrial profile of each state. Some states are also more politically open to aggressive climate policy. California is a prominent example, as the state enacted cap-and-trade policy, which has failed to be passed in many other states and at the national level. Our eventual recommendation decisions for state-level policy organizations will include a focus on organizational strength and track-record as with all our organizations, as well as a focus on the admissions profile and political characteristics of the state(s) each organization works in.

Here are the shallow dives we have conducted so far.

———— National Caucus of Environmental Legislators (NCEL)

Who are they and what do they do?

The National Caucus of Environmental Legislators (NCEL) is a non-profit group that supports state legislators in developing climate policy by providing tailored research and recommendations to policymakers and connecting them to each other to learn from each other's work. The group was founded in 1996 by Maryland Delegate Leon Billings, and formalized as a 501(c)3 non-profit group in 2007.

Their work involves four primary activities:

1. ***Research***: Producing fact-sheets and summaries of scientific research for distribution to legislators, including in response to legislator requests for information
2. ***Educate***: NCEL keeps legislators informed about current environmental issues and connects legislators to experts and to each other
3. ***Convene***: Through events such as an annual national in-person forum and other smaller meetings, legislators meet each other and learn about key environmental policy topics
4. ***Empower***: Through sharing environmental success stories with a large group of legislators, and organizing smaller coalitions such as the Carbon Costs Coalition

NCEL is bi-partisan. In addition, NCEL is focused on environmental issues broadly including conservation and pollution issues. While climate and energy are one of the issue areas NCEL focuses on, they are not the group's exclusive issue areas.

NCEL does not engage in formal lobbying, preferring to work through providing high-quality information and connecting legislators to each other.

What have they accomplished or claim to have accomplished?

In their latest annual report (2019), NCEL claims the following:

- 1,200+ participants (as there are approx. 7,380 state legislators nation-wide in the US, this amounts to about 16%, the nature of "participant" is not entirely clear)
- 152 attendees at the national forum (approx. 13% of all participants, and 2% of all state legislators in the US)

- 110+ meetings with individual legislators
- 248 media mentions

NCEL claims to have assisted legislators in 11 states with formulating offshore drilling legislation, and cites 5 states that implemented offshore drilling legislation. NCEL mentions five states that enacted renewable energy targets, and one state (Oregon) that enacted any form of carbon pricing. While each of these mentioned policies appear as significant achievements, Giving Green has not yet fully verified the precise role played by the NCEL in achieving these legislative successes.

What potential do they have for impact?

NCEL's model is promising. State legislators are responsible for major environmental legislation, and are also often part-time legislators with limited resources to engage in extensive legislative work on their own. The legislative subsidy model and networking model employed by NCEL seems to be promising in this context, as it may allow legislators to pursue better, more pro-climate policies than they would have the capacity for otherwise.

Notably, climate and energy is just one of many foci of NCEL. This may be a cause for concern if the organization's climate and energy practice is under-resourced due to its diverse range of focus issues.

NCEL's model is bi-partisan, focused on producing scientific and sound information. Depending on the broader legislative and political context in the states, this may be an advantage that fosters credibility and compromise, or it may be less effective than a partisan approach that balances political and policy considerations in formulating policies and recommendations.

How strong is the organization, and what are their risks?

NCEL currently has 7 full-time employees and 4 senior advisors. In addition, much of the organization's work is supported by state legislators. In most states, a single legislator serves as a state lead responsible for convening legislators in that state. At this time, we do not have clear information on the strength of the organization.

What is their financial need?

NCEL currently operates with a yearly revenue in the $1-2m range. This suggests there may be room to expand their work, but we do not have complete information on their financial need at this time. NCEL actively solicits donations on their website.

OUR TAKE:

NCEL's work appears to be promising overall. However, the extent to which their work is climate-focused vs. focused on other environmental issue areas is unclear, and we hope to spend more time analyzing their work in the future.

Elected Officials to Protect America (EOPA)

Who are they and what do they do?

EOPA is a group that seeks to unite state-level and local officials to advocate towards more powerful officials for the adoption of particular climate and energy goals, which range from banning fracking to declaring climate emergencies.

They have worked in California, New York, Maine, and Arizona on climate and environmental issues (water protection is one of their key policy concerns, which is not necessarily related to greenhouse gasses).

The organization works primarily by creating letters (such as letters to the governor) that elected officials can sign. In addition, they organize a "bus tour" of elected officials (state and local level) who are also veterans to travel the country engaging communities on climate change.

What have they accomplished or claim to have accomplished?

EOPA claims to have played a key role in catalyzing fracking bans, particularly in California. Otherwise, their effect on climate policy is unclear.

What potential do they have for impact?

Their main method of action is letter writing and tours, and there is not much evidence that this is an effective advocacy technique. Their strong focus on fracking and water protection has unclear implications for atmospheric greenhouse gas concentrations.

How strong is the organization, and what are their risks?

The organization has 10 staff members, some of whom are former officials and veterans.

What is their financial need?

At the moment, donations are funnelled towards supporting their bus tour. They are a subsidiary of a Maine-Based non-profit company with a $100,000-$200,000 annual revenue stream.

OUR TAKE:

Overall, we believe that uniting state and local level officials to work towards combating climate change is important work. Before conducting further research into EOPA, we hope to see more clear evidence of impact to date.

Who are they and what do they do?

Climate Solutions uses a variety of insider and outsider advocacy methods to advocate for pro-climate legislation in Oregon and Washington States. Billing themselves a "clean energy economy non-profit," our review of their annual reports from 2017-2018 suggests they have a strong thematic focus on clean public transportation, regulating carbon emissions and preventing the construction and expansion of fossil fuels projects in their state (as well as fracking), and partnering with cities and local leaders in Washington and Oregon to push forward and support the adoption and execution of 100% renewable energy pledges and commitments.

Climate Solutions has a staff of about 30, which includes contracted lobbyists hired by the organization to lobby the state governments (and potentially local governments as well) of Washington and Oregon states. In 2018, the organization spent $254,314 on direct lobbying activities according to their public tax documents. This represents approximately 8.5% of their total revenue for ($2,989,273).

What have they accomplished or claim to have accomplished?

Climate Solutions presents accounts of their accomplishments on their website in their annual reports and yearly accomplishments lists. In recent years, the key accomplishments they have highlighted include:

- Promoting electric busses in Washington
- Working with a number of cities and counties including Portland to adopt renewable energy commitments
- Supporting bills to adopt carbon pricing in Washington (failed) and Clean Energy Jobs in Oregon (House Bill 2020, a carbon pricing proposal which famously prompted 11 Republican legislators to leave the state and go into hiding while being searched for by State Troopers, and precipitated threats against the safety of legislators by militia groups). Neither bill has yet succeeded in passing the state legislature.

What potential do they have for impact?

Climate Solutions has offices in the capitals of both Oregon and Washington states. Overall, Climate Solutions seems to have a strong, if mixed track record, and a demonstrated ability to muster multiple approaches to insider advocacy in pushing forward progress on climate at the state and local levels in some of the states that may provide some of the country's most politically fertile ground for pro-climate legislation. Overall, however, they have lent their support to large state-level initiatives that have failed. The high-profile attempts at passing supposedly bi-partisan carbon pricing legislation in both Washington and Oregon failed, as bipartisan support was not achieved in practice and the bills failed to generate much excitement on the left. The impact potential of Climate Solutions may be dependent on their ability to learn from these defeats and pioneer new approaches to policy. Their 2019 annual report suggests they are pivoting towards other approaches to climate legislation that are not pricing-specific. In addition, their work on areas like preventing the expansion of fossil fuels infrastructure seems promising.

How strong is the organization, and what are their risks?

The organization has 30 staff members, some of whom are affiliated lobbyists hired from external firms. Overall, we have no clear information suggesting organizational health.

What is their financial need?

According to their latest public tax filings, Climate Solutions currently operates in the $2-3m annual revenue range. They actively solicit donations and provide a variety of options for donations on their website.

OUR TAKE:

Overall, Climate Solutions seems to be do interesting and important work, and we hope to spend more time analyzing their work in the future.

Western Resource Advocates (WRA)

Who are they and what do they do?

Western Resource Advocates is a group that works in seven western states (Arizona, Colorado, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Wyoming, and Utah) on a variety of environmental issue areas, focused on climate, the conservation of rivers and lakes, conservation and access to public lands, and water and air quality. Their overall mission and vision is to conserve and protect lands in the west, specifically the states they work in.

Within their climate work, their focus is on decarbonization in the power sector. They advocate for grid modernization, clean energy transition and retiring coal, and clean buildings and transportation. WRA's current climate strategy aims to use law and policy to reduce to 45% below 2016 levels by 2030. Their work combines a variety of methods, including lobbying, research production/publication, and public engagement around actions individuals can take to support their work and environmental causes generally.

What have they accomplished or claim to have accomplished?

WRA published a list of climate-related accomplishments in 2019. These include:

1. "In New Mexico, state lawmakers enacted landmark legislation that paves the way for the retirement of the state's last coal-fired generating station and will ensure that 50% of the state's electricity is renewable by 2030 and 100% is carbon-free by 2045.
2. In Nevada, a new law increases the state's renewable portfolio standard to 50% by 2030 and sets a goal of 100% carbon-free electricity generation by 2050.

3. In Colorado, lawmakers passed legislation that sets economy-wide goals for reducing the state's greenhouse gas pollution 26% by 2025, 50% by 2030, and 90% by 2050.

While WRA claims these as their own victories, the role played by WRA in these events is currently unclear to our team.

What potential do they have for impact?

Overall, none of the focus area states have particularly high total emissions, and together they account for approximately 8% of the nation's carbon emissions (though per capita emissions are high, especially in Wyoming). Taken together, all of these states emit less than Texas or California alone. Therefore, we do not think this region is the most important for climate work relative to others. Nonetheless, WRA appears to be effective in influencing legislation within the region.

How strong is the organization, and what are their risks?

WRA has a staff of 59, who have a background in law, policy, energy economics, and a variety of other fields. WRA has offices in the state capitals in all the states where they work. Their staff seems to be strong, but we have little other information suggestive of overall health.

What is their financial need?

Western Resource Advocates currently operates in the $9-10 million revenue range, a fairly high number for a regionally-focused climate policy group. They claim every dollar donated = 1.7 tons of CO2e averted, though their basis for this claim is currently unclear. In addition, the group provides a variety of methods for donations on their website.

OUR TAKE:

Western Resources Advocates seems to be doing interesting work, though their target geography has a smaller contribution to climate change than other regions. We hope to spend more time reviewing their work in the future.

Great Plains Institute (GPI)

Who are they and what do they do?

Great Plains Institute, founded in 1997, is an organization that works with a variety of stakeholders including governments, businesses, and energy companies, to promote pro-climate practices through providing research and guidance for decarbonising their partner's work. Currently their work relevant to state-level policy focuses on the following areas:

- **Carbon Management**: This work is national in scope, and not regionally focused. The deployment of carbon capture technology is Great Plains Institute's primary focus area within Carbon Management.
- **Energy Efficiency**: primarily through modernizing grids, building technical assistance models and business models that support grid modernization. This work is focused in Minnesota and Michigan.
- **Transportation & Fuels**: primarily promoting policies to foster adoption of electric vehicles along with promoting technology to decarbonise fuel
- **Electricity**: Working with state energy regulators to create roadmaps to decarbonization of energy systems. This includes price signals and fair market rules in energy markets. This work primarily takes place in the Midwest and in Rhode Island.

Great Plains Institute often bills its work as consulting work, listing its services on its website.

What have they accomplished or claim to have accomplished?

Accomplishments highlighted by GPI on their website include:

- Supporting the passage of a hydrogen fuel cell law in Michigan
- Influencing the Midwestern Independent Systems Operator's policies
- Supporting the passage of a law in Minnesota to promote the competitiveness of biofuel in fuel markets

What potential do they have for impact?

GPI appears to be structured at least in part as a consulting organization, which may make donating to GPI less marginally effective than donating to an organization that does not gain income from providing a service. Giving Green intends to look more closely into this question.

How strong is the organization, and what are their risks?

GPI's primary headquarters is located in Minnesota. GPI currently has a staff of 36. Their web materials strongly highlight their CEO's background: "In 2016, US Department of Energy Secretary Ernest Moniz appointed Rolf to the department's Electricity Advisory Committee. He has written or helped craft new laws on high-performance buildings, hydrogen and fuel cell technologies, resource-efficient land use, and sustainable development. He was a contributing author to the third National Climate Assessment, a comprehensive report required by Congress on climate change impacts in the US." Overall, we have little information at present on the strength of the organization or its risks.

What is their financial need?

Great Plains Institute currently operates in the $5-6m range. As their business model is in part a consulting model, we are not currently sure of the extent of their financial need.

OUR TAKE:

Overall, GPI seems like a solid organization engaged in important work. Our team hopes to conduct more research into them in the future, and in particular better understand how much room they have for additional funding given their consulting model.

——————— Chesapeake Climate Action Network (CCAN)

Who are they and what do they do?

Chesapeake Climate Action Network (CCAN) is an organization that uses both outsider and insider advocacy/activism techniques to advocate for clean energy, with a focus on the Chesapeake region of Maryland, Virginia, and Washington DC. The organization's work is focused on campaigns organized in each region, which combine multiple different approaches to policy change focused on a particular policy area. Some campaigns are not explicitly climate focused (but are claimed to influence climate), such as a campaign for DC Statehood.

CCAN organizes campaigns that are both National and Local. National campaigns relevant to policy topics include advocating for Cap and Trade. State level campaign topics include prevention of pipeline work and offshore drilling, preventing new fossil fuel infrastructure, and advocating for COVID stimulus that includes environmental provisions.

CCAN has spent a comparatively large amount of money on official registered lobbying, reporting $95,177 in 2019, approximately 6% of total revenue.

What have they accomplished or claim to have accomplished?

CCAN claims involvement in a large number of policy victories. Many of these victories took place through coalition work, so the precise contribution of CCAN is currently unclear.

What potential do they have for impact?

Overall, we are puzzled that CCAN does not maintain offices in the VA and Maryland state capitals. CCAN combines a number of different insider and outsider advocacy techniques in what seems like a promising combination. In addition, they seem concerned with tracking victories. However, the focus of their work is unclear compared to similar organized activism/advocacy organizations.

How strong is the organization, and what are their risks?

The organization has 16 full time staff members and is structured as a broader grassroots movement, involving volunteers and members who are not paid employees of the organization. Overall, we currently lack clear information on CCAN's organizational strength.

What is their financial need?

CCAN currently operates in the $1-2m revenue range. Given their operations, this suggests room for additional funding.

OUR TAKE:

Overall, CCAN appears to be a promising organization. We hope to conduct more analysis of their work in the future and better understand their impact to date as well as operating model based outside the capitals of the states they work in.