

Climate Change and Clean Energy Politics in Ohio

As the Democratic presidential candidates get set to square off in Ohio for the next round of debates, the state is in the midst of confronting the challenges posed by our changing climate. At the same time, Ohio is in the midst of a contentious battle over the future of renewable energy, with outside special interests fighting to roll back efficiency standards. That fight and the following list of Ohio climate impacts helps illustrate why it is so critical that our next president has a plan to combat the climate crisis.

Special interests are spending big money to promote legislation subsidizing dirty energy while stopping progress on renewables. Earlier this year, Gov. Mike DeWine signed what [has been called](#), “the worst energy bill of the 21st century.” The bill adds a new fee to “[subsidize coal plants](#) run by the Ohio Valley Electric Corporation.” OVEC will receive \$50 million per year through 2030 for the coal plants. [HB 6 rolls back efficiency standards](#) to levels that utility companies have “almost reached already.” Supporters of the bailout have now engaged in “[over the top demagoguery](#)” to keep voters from having a say on the measure on the ballot in November 2020.

Climate change is harming water quality in Lake Erie. Warmer water has caused more toxic algal blooms to appear in Lake Erie. [The EPA](#) believes that increasingly heavy downpours due to climate change could increase the number of pollutants that runoff into water and increase the risk of algal blooms. The blooms have contaminated municipal water supplies, making it unsafe to drink. In 2014, [Ohio had to declare a state of emergency](#) when Toledo’s water supply, which serves 500,000 people, [became undrinkable](#). The contaminated water sickened [110 people](#). In 2017, [The Cleveland Plain Dealer](#) wrote, “Over the past decade, blue-green algal blooms, which sometimes turn toxic, have become an annual summer plague on Lake Erie.” Earlier this year, [Gov. DeWine asked legislators to spend \\$900 million](#) to protect the health Ohio’s waterways and Lake Erie.

Climate change is increasing air pollution and is causing health problems. [The EPA](#) found that higher temperatures, “can increase the production of ground-level ozone, a pollutant that causes lung and heart problems.” [The Union of Concerned Scientists](#) noted that ground-level ozone can “diminish lung function, cause a burning sensation in the lungs, and aggravate asthma and other respiratory conditions.” Ground-level ozone can also help cause premature death in people with heart or lung disease. [The American Lung Association](#) found that [the Cleveland area was the 29th worst](#) for high ozone days, and [Cincinnati was 31st worst](#). [Cincinnati’s climate change](#) plan calls for the development of an Air Quality Action Plan.

Ohio will face heat waves, putting the vulnerable at risk. [The Union of Concerned Scientists](#) found, “Under the higher-emissions scenario, both Cincinnati and Cleveland could experience nearly an entire summer of days above 90°F toward the end of the century.” [One study](#) found that heat-related deaths would increase by more than 60% for Cleveland and Columbus by 2050 without substantial cut in emissions, the number goes over 100% by 2080. Earlier this month, [Columbus kept its schools closed for 2 days in a row](#) as it set a record high for Columbus temperatures in October. A third of Columbus schools lack air-conditioning, and [the EPA](#)



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notes that, “Northern cities like Cleveland are vulnerable to heat waves, because many houses and apartments lack air conditioning, and urban areas are typically warmer than their rural surroundings”.

Climate change means lost crops for Ohio. [The EPA](#) found that even though growing seasons are lengthened in a warmer climate, hot summers were likely to reduce the yields of corn and soybeans. [The Union of Concerned Scientists](#) estimated that climate change-induced weather variability would likely cause yields of all major crops to decline. [A climate researcher at Ohio State University](#) said, “The last 12-month period (June 2018 to May 2019) has been the wettest on record (for the state).” [The USDA](#) said in August that poor weather has prevented planting across much of the state, leaving 1.5 million acres or over 15% of Ohio’s agricultural land is lying fallow. [The Columbus Dispatch](#) reported, “After 2050, the negative effects of climate change are expected to increase; more weeds, diseases and pests are likely to reduce the productivity of most crops and livestock, in addition to weather-related stresses, according to projections by a National Climate Assessment.” [The National Climate Assessment](#) found future crop yields will likely decrease in the Midwest due to more anomalous weather events like springtime cold air outbreaks and heatwaves in summer.