



Pittsburgh Regional  
**Building Trades Council**  
Building Better Together

March 25, 2021

To all Pennsylvania House Representatives and Senators:

On behalf of the Greater Pittsburgh Regional Building Trades Council, we urge all House and Senate members to support legislation that will protect our workers, communities, and Pennsylvania from the catastrophic impacts of participation in the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI). We support and hope you will join us (and many other statewide, regional, and local unions) in supporting, legislation that requires Governor Wolf and the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) to recognize the express statutory authority of the General Assembly before finalizing and implementing a job-killing carbon tax.

Last year, many of you supported House Bill 2025, which would have properly placed the decision to impose this highly consequential RGGI tax within the jurisdiction of the only constitutionally lawful branch of government to make such a decision - the Legislative Branch. For those that voted with us, we thank you and encourage you to stand by your decision. For those that did not, and for new members, considering all the information you have received about the vast economic harm caused by RGGI participation with no commensurate regional environmental benefits, we respectfully request you to stand with these hard working, blue collar families whose livelihoods depend on a comprehensive, responsible energy policy that includes and promotes all forms of energy, including coal and natural gas electric-fired generation.

To be clear, our trade unions and members are not opposed to policies intended to mitigate or adapt to climate change impacts. We live, work, and raise our families here. And we are people who enjoy the natural beauty and benefits of our state. In fact, we support the efforts being discussed by the Pennsylvania Senate and House Environmental Resources and Energy Committees as they relate to carbon capture and storage, and the development of hydrogen fuel from natural gas.

Governor Wolf and DEP Secretary Patrick McDonnell claim joining RGGI is the will of the people. If they are so convinced of this then why do they fear going through the legally proper process of putting this question to the legislature – the body that represents the people and is far better equipped than the Governor or Secretary McDonnell to understand the true and devastating local impacts of this unilateral decision.

Furthermore, RGGI will do little to create the positive impact touted by the Governor and those who support joining RGGI. The Penn State Center for Energy Law and Policy estimates that 86 percent of all CO2 reductions caused by plant closures in Pennsylvania will be offset by increased CO2 emissions in non-RGGI, PJM states such as West Virginia and Ohio who will rush to fill the void created by closure of our plants and to supply energy we need here in Pennsylvania. Energy we produce in-state today. Make no mistake – West Virginia and Ohio will gladly accept capital investment that should be occurring in our state.

Frankly, it is inexplicable as to why the Governor is going down a path of unilateral adoption of RGGI, which would in effect reduce atmospheric carbon by only 14 percent yet create devastating economic consequences. Adoption of RGGI will:

- Force the premature shut down of every coal and many natural gas-fired power plants in Pennsylvania.
- Eliminate thousands of current and future jobs opportunities.
- Add economic stipulations which create a de facto ban on the development of any new natural gas plants in Pennsylvania and by default creating a further chilling effect on private investment in Pennsylvania.
- Result in double digit electric bill increases for residential, commercial, and industrial customers, while this will be especially burdensome to fixed income senior households, such as our retirees and low-income families it will also result in price increases for goods and services; unquestionably these increased costs will be passed along to end-use consumers.

HB 2025 would have led to the process specified by the Pennsylvania Constitution and Air Pollution Control Act (APCA) whereby the Legislative Branch would debate and decide on the wisdom and benefits of such a carbon taxation program. While HB 2025 passed with bipartisan majorities in both legislative chambers – the will of the people - Governor Wolf vetoed the legislation despite our efforts urging him to allow it to become law.

Since his RGGI participation executive order in late 2019, we have attempted to convey to the Governor our deepest concerns about the RGGI tax impacts on Pennsylvania's fossil fuel electric power plants constructed, operated, and serviced by our members, and the businesses and workers that support the electric generation industry in our Commonwealth.

Our pleas have gone unanswered and, despite the many, largely unresolvable objections from the Independent Regulatory Review Commission, the Governor continues to press forward as if other opinions are a mere distraction. We appeal to the General Assembly to act on the will of those you represent.

In follow-up to this letter, individual representatives from state, regional and local labor organizations will communicate with many of you directly, requesting your support for SB 119 and HB 637. Specifically, given the Governor's veto of HB 2025 last year, we ask that you advise us how you will vote on BOTH the legislation on final passage AND, in the event of yet

another veto, on whether you will stand with Pennsylvania's building trades or Governor Wolf on a veto override. This is important to all of us, and we urge you to stand with the blue-collar men and women of the building and construction trades in Pennsylvania, even if it means taking a position against the Governor and certain legislative leaders.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Thomas A. Melcher". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, decorative initial "T".

Thomas Melcher

Business Manager

Pittsburgh Regional Building Trades Council

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cc: Governor Tom Wolf