

# WA Senate GOP proposes energy plan aimed at emissions and reliability. Here are the details

[By Shauna Sowersby](#) November 30, 2022 5:00 AM



What is carbon sequestration?

The U.S. Geological Survey offers information about why capturing carbon from the atmosphere is important for reducing the harmful impacts of carbon emissions that cause climate change. By Warren Sterling

Countering climate legislation passed by state Democrats in the last several years, state GOP leaders announced a proposal on Tuesday for a new energy plan leading into the 2023 legislative session.

“We need to have an energy plan that is rational, reasonable and then reliable to address our energy and climate needs,” said Curtis King, R-Yakima, ranking Republican on the Senate Transportation Committee and

the Senate Labor, Commerce and Tribal Affairs Committee. "What we have been given so far is a series of dates and goals that are mostly unattainable and not at all realistic."

King said he believes what he and his colleagues are calling "Power Washington" will still reduce carbon emissions while providing a reliable power grid.

Senate Republican Leader John Braun from Centralia and Senate Republican Floor Leader Shelly Short from Addy also joined the press conference.

"This isn't about going backward, this is about taking the base policies that have been enacted in this state and do our work to make sure that reliability and affordability are there as we continue to innovate, and I'm confident that we can get there," Short said.

King highlighted three areas of the proposal during the press conference, although the full plan includes seven energy goals for Republicans this upcoming session.

First, hybrid vehicles should be incentivized over electric vehicles because they are less costly and won't create a high demand for electricity, according to King.

In August, Gov. Jay Inslee announced that new sales of gas-powered vehicles [would be banned](#) in the state by 2035. That announcement followed a goal set by state lawmakers earlier in the year to phase out the sale of new internal-combustion powered vehicles in Washington by 2030.

Additionally, Washington law specifies that all state agencies must prioritize EVs when they lease or purchase new vehicles.

King said the Republicans' proposal would promote and expand the use of hydrogen, which he believes is a better alternative to an all electric system for freight haulers. Fuel Cell Electric Vehicles (FCEVs), for example, could be

refueled similar to gas cars, and would take less time to refuel than a battery-powered EV, he noted.

According to the U.S. Department of Energy, FCEVs “are more efficient than conventional internal combustion engine vehicles and produce no tailpipe emissions” and only emit water vapor and more air. However, the agency noted that FCEVs are not yet widely available.

Finally, King highlighted the prioritization of carbon capture, and said he thinks forests need to be well-managed. The Senator said he believes other plants such as hemp, bamboo and cucumbers should be studied for their ability to sequester carbon.

The Department of Natural Resources announced earlier this year that Washington state would be the first in the U.S. [to preserve 10,000 acres of land for carbon mitigation](#). The move was the first time a state agency used a carbon market to preserve forests planned for logging.

Republicans also want [to prevent solar and wind farms from receiving “fast-track approval”](#) when they are being built in agricultural areas. Additionally, the proposal suggests tracking the impacts of fuel standards that were passed by the state Legislature in 2021.

Sen. Marko Liias, D-Mukilteo, and Chair of the Senate Transportation Committee, told McClatchy Tuesday that this is the first time as a state lawmaker that he’s ever seen a proposal by Republicans that seeks solutions for the climate crisis.

“I think they’ve seen the voters speak repeatedly that they want the Legislature to take action on climate to protect our state from the harm that’s coming and I’m encouraged that while it isn’t a plan that meets the needs I think we have for the state, that they’re at least presenting some alternatives and beginning to acknowledge that there’s a climate crisis,” Liias said.

During the 2022 legislative session, Lias spearheaded the nearly \$17 billion "[Move Ahead Washington](#)" package that provided historic and sustainable investments in transit around the state. King voted against the measure.

Lias said Democrats also are looking at all possibilities to become technology neutral, including FCEVs. Particularly, he said he believes the state should lean in to hydrogen in trucking and heavier applications. He added that he thinks hydrogen has merits in the transportation sector in those types of unique challenges, but that he doesn't have a preference for one specific overall solution as long as it is cost-effective and technology neutral.

In 2021, the state Legislature passed the Climate Commitment Act. The program "[caps and reduces greenhouse gas](#) (GHG) emissions from Washington's largest emitting sources and industries, allowing businesses to find the most efficient path to lower carbon emissions," according to the Department of Ecology. In 2020, GHG limits were codified into state law, with a goal of "95% below 1990 levels" and net zero emissions by 2050.

The 105-day legislative session begins Jan. 9.

Shauna Sowersby was a freelancer for several local and national publications before joining McClatchy's northwest newspapers covering the Legislature.