

OPPOSE 1783

Topic: Natural Gas Preemption

Bill Patron: O'Quinn

Overview:

HB 1783 prohibits all state and local government entities from electrifying new building construction, slowing the transition to a 100% clean energy economy. While the building sector consumes a significant amount of fossil fuels, no Virginia localities or state agencies that we know of are proposing to deny building permits to buildings that use natural gas. This is instead a preemptive move initiated by the natural gas industry to limit the autonomy of localities. This [concerted legal strategy to prevent local action](#) is a direct response to the growing demand for healthier, cleaner buildings across the nation, and it poses a serious threat to climate action.

HB 1783 uses a false “energy choice” narrative, arguing that the intent is to protect consumer choice when it comes to sources of energy. However, a building’s energy source is not usually an individual’s decision. Available infrastructure depends on state and local policies. If Virginia’s localities decide in the future that natural gas is not the right choice for their communities, [the American Gas Association’s legislation](#) should not preemptively deny them this option.

Cities may have legitimate reasons to want new buildings to be free of natural gas. Beyond the climate implications, there is numerous evidence that [natural gas causes significantly lower indoor air quality](#). All-electric buildings also help communities control future costs by avoiding expensive new gas infrastructure that would otherwise need to be maintained and paid off by customers for decades to come. Meeting the energy needs of new buildings with electricity saves money and reduces carbon pollution, and localities should not be prevented from bringing these benefits to their residents.

Reasons to oppose:

This proposed legislation seeks to undermine Virginia’s transition to a clean energy economy by preventing all public entities from moving away from natural gas. This preemption bill would prevent building electrification in the Commonwealth and is part of a nationwide strategy supported by the American Gas Association. Virginia must hold the line on this type of effort to protect our clean energy future. Virginia rejected this policy in 2022, and we should continue to do so this session.



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This position was taken by Virginia Conservation Network (VCN)’s Legislative Committee and Board of Directors and is supported by Virginia’s conservation community. For a complete list of VCN positions, visit www.vcnva.org/bill-tracker. VCN is committed to building a powerful, diverse, and highly-coordinated conservation movement focused on protecting our Commonwealth’s natural resources today and for tomorrow.