

The federal government gets all the headlines, but state governments control much of energy policy. They control local utilities and set policies on renewable energy. But because so many jurisdictions are involved, it's hard to get an overall picture of what's really happening. I've been trying to get at least a rough sense of what's going in those fifty states. This [new report](#) includes material from earlier blog posts and a good deal of additional information. But it's still short enough to be pretty readable. Thanks to some hard work by Luke Sherman, there's also an interactive map on the [webpage](#), which you can click to find out what's happening in a specific state or region. For instance, here's the [entry](#) for Texas, whose renewable energy progress may surprise you.

The good news is that renewables are already making inroads, even though the political balance in most state governments right now is adverse, — even in places you wouldn't expect like South Carolina. Environmental groups and the renewable energy industry have worked hard to educate policymakers about the benefits of renewables. Corporations like Apple and Google have exerted pressure on states to provide them with clean energy. And even the military has played a role in promoting renewables in some states. But there's a lot more to be done.

The Clean Power Plan was designed to push states into linking their energy policies with environmental needs. Although it hasn't gone into effect, and may never do so, even the preliminary planning exercises seem to have gotten state EPAs and state public utility commissions talking in a constructive way.

Making this trend continue involves building more local capacity in each state to deal with these issues. Universities can play an important role in this effort. Programs in energy economics, power systems engineering, and energy policy could provide valuable expertise to state governments. Law schools could also play an important role. There are some significant law school efforts to address state energy issues, as in Georgetown's clearinghouse and the Berkeley/UCLA initiative on business and climate change. But law schools have been slow to realize the need to hire faculty in energy law, and many lack institutional infrastructure for engaging state policy development.

Energy policy is one of the many reasons why the midterm elections are so important. Even though renewables are gaining ground in many states dominated by conservatives, they could do even better if governors and legislators took climate change more seriously.

The transformation of our energy system has been moving more quickly than anyone imagined at the turn of the century. Anything we can do to accelerate that trend will help in combatting climate change. We cannot afford to pin all of our hopes on the federal

government – the past year has taught us that, if nothing else.