

Trump won't be able to undo all of Obama's legacy on climate change, but much of it will be stymied. State governments will continue to remain active, and will fight Trump in the courts, along with environmental groups. And in a series of recent posts, I've described other channels that will continue to operate:

1. Municipalities. In states across the country—Red and Blue — cities have taken steps to foster renewable energy and cut carbon emissions.
2. Corporations. Major corporations have supported the Paris Agreement, are shifting toward use of renewable energy, and are starting to plan to deal with climate risks.
3. The military. The military has good reasons to diminish its reliance on fossil fuels, to consider how climate change may increase the risks of conflict, and to plan for the impact of climate change on naval bases and other facilities.
4. Transnational networks. Trump may disdain international cooperation on climate change, but cities, corporations, environmental organizations and others have formed their own networks across national borders, which continue to function despite federal indifference.

The existence of these other channels relates to the nature of climate change. Both the impacts of climate change and the energy system are pervasive, affecting nearly every entity in society. With or without federal funding, these entities have incentives to take action. Moreover, while climate change is not the top issue for voters, there is broad support for addressing climate change and fostering renewable energy. This provides an opportunity for governors, mayors, and corporations to gain public attention and favor with climate action. Finally, effort to cooperate in taking action are fostered by the Internet, which makes it feasible for people in distant locations to find each other and coordinate.

The upshot is that climate policy is highly robust. Trump's election was a serious blow to federal climate policy. But when one channel of progress is blocked, pressure increases on the other channels. As Trump will discover, the campaign against climate change is not easily defeated.