Every day seems to bring more news of the Trump Administration's dogged efforts to reduce environmental protections and accelerate climate change with increased carbon emissions. But, as has been true since Trump took office, the picture at the state level is much different. State governments across the country have accelerated their efforts to decarbonize, while efforts save the coal industry have foundered. Here are some of the latest developments.

Early this month, Maryland's legislature adopted a 50% renewable energy mandate for 2030. The law also doubled the target for obtaining power from offshore wind. Governor Hogan had vetoed an earlier increase in the renewable energy mandate in 2017 but was overridden by the legislature. Hogan, a possible primary challenger to Donald Trump, is still thinking over his next move at this writing.

In mid-April, New Jersey adopted a 50% mandate for 2030, along with a measure to subsidize the state's nuclear reactors. The nuclear subsidy received cautious support from environmentalists. As the NRDC said, "We don't want to see the abrupt closure of nuclear plants, because if you close them tomorrow, we know that they'll just be replaced by more fossil fuels. You have to have an orderly transition plan that involves scaling up renewables first, so that when the nuclear plants close, they're replaced with clean energy."

Also in mid-April, Washington State enacted an impressive clean energy initiative. The initiative has three phases:

1. By 2025, utilities must eliminate reliance on coal-fired electricity (now about 15% of the energy mix.)
2. By 2030, 80% of their power must come from carbon-free sources. The remaining 20% can be covered by purchasing renewable energy credits, paying a $100/ton carbon fee, or investing in such things as charging stations for electric vehicles.
3. By 2045, all utilities must be using 100% self-generated zero carbon energy.

The law also contains other utility reforms that will help bring down emissions.

Later in the month, Washington also passed strict new energy efficiency standards for appliances. According to Environment Washington, those standards "will prevent some 176 thousand metric tons of climate-altering carbon dioxide from entering the atmosphere, which is the equivalent of taking more than 38,000 cars off the road each year."

In late April, Indiana regulators rejected a proposal for a major new natural gas plant. They cited fears that declining renewables prices and other market changes could render the plant uneconomical, converting it into a stranded asset. An effort to save the state's coal plants, spearheaded by none other than Scott Pruitt, also ran into headwinds. Proposed legislation, supported by Pruitt, would impose a moratorium on any major new power sources, preventing them from being used to replace uneconomic coal plants. Despite Pruitt's lobbying, the Indiana Chamber of Commerce roundly rejected the proposal and urged legislators to vote against it. An earlier effort to pass the moratorium had already been rejected by the Indiana House.

Finally, the Nevada legislature passed a law a week ago creating a similar 50% renewable mandate for 2030 and a 100% carbon-free target for 2050. Prior law had only contained a 25% target for 2025. About two-thirds of the state's power now comes from natural gas. The state's last remaining coal plant is set to retire in 2025, so the main effect of the law will be to ramp down natural gas. The voters had indicated their approval of the new goals in a 2018 referendum, and the measure passed the legislature unanimously.

All of this was in April. We'll see what May brings.