Thirty years ago, the United States joined the U.N. Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). The decades since then have been a saga of victories and defeats for U.S. climate policy. Progress has been made under one President, only to be battered down by the next one. This to-and-fro is a sobering reminder of how much elections matter.

But the rollbacks have never been complete. EPA's power to regulate greenhouse gases, established in litigation in 2007, now seems beyond question. Emissions standards for new cars temporarily stalled under Trump but are nonetheless much tighter than they were before Obama. The U.S. remains a party to the UNFCCC , helped broker the Paris Agreement, and is till a party to that agreement today. Perhaps most importantly, the federal government has invested billions of dollars in clean energy.

Here's a timeline of some of the major events:

1992 President George H.W. Bush signs and U.S. Senate ratifies the UNFCC treaty.

1997 Senate passes resolution that U.S. should not enter into any climate agreement that fails to limit emissions from developing countries.

1998 U.S. signs (but never ratifies) Kyoto Agreement.

2005 Congress passes first tax credit for solar.

2007 Supreme Court decides *Massachusetts v. EPA.*

EPA approves California mandate for zero emission vehicles.

Bush EPA denies waiver to allow California to regulate CO2 emissions from new cars.

2009 EPA formally finds that greenhouse gas emissions endanger human health and welfare.

House of Representatives passes major climate legislation, the Waxman-Markey climate bill, which dies in the Senate.

Obama helps negotiate Copenhagen Accord.

Obama stimulus bill provides $90 billion for renewables.

EPA approves waiver for California to regulate CO2 from new cars.

2011 Supreme Court decides *AEP* case, barring lawsuits against carbon emitters using the federal common law of nuisance.

2012 EPA adopts regulation limiting carbon emissions for new cars.

2014 Supreme Court decides *UARG v. EPA,* striking one part of an EPA permitting program covering carbon emissions from new pollution source, but upholding most of the program.

2015 Paris Agreement adopted with strong U.S. advocacy.

Clean Power Plan issued, then stayed by Supreme Court.

2017 Trump announces U.S. withdrawal from Paris Agreement.

2019 Trump EPA revokes California's waiver for regulating CO2 from new cars.

Trump EPA issues Affordable Clean Energy rule, repeals Clean Power Plan.

2020 U.S. withdraws from Paris Agreement (Trump).

Trump EPA blocks scheduled tightening of CO2 emissions standards for new cars

2021 Biden signs infrastructure bill with approximately $100 billion for electrical grid buildout, public transportation, and clean energy.

U.S. rejoins Paris Agreement (Biden).

D.C. Circuit vacates Affordable Clean Energy rule.

2022 EPA issues tough new standards for carbon emissions from new vehicles.

Supreme Court decides *West Virginia v. EPA*, striking down Clean Power Plan.

EPA restores California waiver to regulate new cars.

Congress enacts Inflation Reduction Act, providing more than $300 billion in funding to clean energy.

The story of policy at the state level is rosier, with California leading the way in the 1990s and early 2000s, but increasingly joined by other states. Even many GOP controlled states have embraced renewable energy, though they still prefer to avoid any mention of climate change. There’s been a lot less of the backsliding we’ve seen at the federal level and more durable progress.

Action by states, even when joined by the private sector, is never going to be enough. We need the active support of the federal government. You have to admire the climate advocates in Washington who get repeatedly smashed down but always get to their feet again to continue the fight.