

Baker Climate Veto 2.0 Action Guide

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Updated February 9, 2021 • contact jacob.stern@sierraclub.org with questions/corrections

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Take Action: Contact your Legislator!

We're approaching the end of this legislative tug of war between House/Senate and Governor and we need your help. Please email and call your legislator to **ask them to reject any amendments that weaken the bill**. The climate crisis requires urgent action and every day wasted is another missed opportunity to address carbon pollution and existing environmental injustices.

Action Target: All Reps and Senators who voted for the climate bill ([vote tallies](#))

Email Template

Dear [Rep/Senator],

I am thankful for the legislature's leadership on climate and environmental justice issues this past year. It's clear that addressing the climate crisis is a priority for the vast majority of legislators and that makes me proud to be a Massachusetts resident.

I am writing today to ask you to request that [House/Senate] leadership move urgently to **reject any of the Governor's amendments to S.9 that would weaken the legislation**. It is critical that the legislature preserves the following key provisions as originally passed:

- The 2030 and 2040 emissions targets
- The sector emissions sublimits
- The net zero stretch building code

Climate science tells us we have only 9 years left to significantly address carbon emissions to escape the worst impacts of climate change. Please talk to your colleagues and ask them to bring the bill back for a floor vote as soon as possible with no amendments that weaken the bill.

Sincerely,

[Your Name]

[Your Town/City]

Phone Script

Hi, my name is [Your Name] and I live in [Your Town].

I am calling today to thank you for your leadership on climate and environmental justice issues this past year. I am calling today to ask you to request that [House/Senate] leadership move urgently to **reject any of the Governor's amendments to the climate bill (S.9) that would weaken the legislation**. It is critical that the legislature preserves the following parts as originally passed:

- The 2030 and 2040 emissions targets
- The sector emissions sublimits
- The net zero stretch building code

Climate science tells us we have only 9 years left to significantly address carbon emissions to escape the worst impacts of climate change. Please talk to your colleagues and ask them to bring the bill back for a floor vote as soon as possible with no amendments that weaken the bill. Thank you for all you do!

Sincerely,

[Your Name]

[Your Town/City]

Other Resources

Search legislator contact information: <https://malegislature.gov/search/findmylegislator>

Legislator social media handles: https://www.progressivemass.com/ma_legislators_contact

Background & Context

The road to passing comprehensive climate legislation in Massachusetts has been a long one. Here's a quick recap: the Massachusetts Senate passed their original climate bill (S.2500) in January 2020. Five months later, the Massachusetts House passed their proposed re-written version. (H.4912). Finally, on January 3, 2021, House and Senate leaders reached a compromise and sent a final version of the bill (S.2995) to Governor Baker's desk for signature. The final version of the bill included important provisions, such as interim emissions goals for 2030, 2035, 2040, and 2045; codified environmental justice policies into law; and implemented a municipal net zero stretch building code. In the final votes, the legislation received overwhelming and bipartisan support in both the House and Senate.

The Governor's 11th hour decision to veto the bill in early January was both shocking and disappointing. Baker falsely claimed that the bill would halt new affordable housing construction and criticized features of the bill, such as the proposed new high-performance building code. Unfortunately, due to restrictions caused by the two-year legislative cycle, the chambers were not able to meet again to potentially override the Governor's veto. Thankfully, House Speaker Ron Mariano, Senate President Karen Spilka, Chairman Tom Golden, and Chairman Barrett quickly moved to re-file and pass the bill ([now called S.9](#)).

On Sunday, February 7, Baker (to no one's surprise) vetoed the bill AGAIN. In the second veto he scaled back a few of his earlier criticisms and instead proposed a series of amendments that would weaken and water down key aspects of the bill, specifically...

- **The 2030 and 2040 emissions targets:** S.9 calls for a 50% reduction in emissions by 2030 and a 75% reduction in emissions by 2040. Baker's amendments would weaken these targets to 45% and 65% respectively.
- **The sector emissions sublimits:** S.9 establishes sector sublimits for different sectors of the economy (electric power, transportation, heating, and cooling, etc). Baker's amendments would severely weaken the accountability power of these sublimits.
- **The net zero stretch building code:** S.9 requires the state quickly move to develop a "net zero carbon building code" for new construction. Baker's amendments would severely weaken this provision by removing the "net zero" definition, slow down the timeline for adoption, and make it easier for communities to opt-out.

The Governor also proposed many smaller edits to the bill, many small technical changes to the language. And on a positive note, he also proposed a couple minor changes that would slightly strengthen the existing environmental justice protections in the bill.

The legislature now must choose one of three options to move forward and they have no timeline in which they are required to act:

1. Reject the Governor's amendments and override his veto (requires $\frac{2}{3}$ votes in both House and Senate).

2. Vote to adopt the Governor's amendments as written.
3. Further negotiation and perhaps adopt some amendments, but not others... this path is the least clear, but perhaps the most likely.

For those who really want to get into the weeds, the Governor has protested the 2030 45% emissions target based on cost to consumers. He claims that the difference between a 45% and 50% reduction in emissions would cost \$6 billion. However, his administration does not accurately take into account the cost of emissions into this calculation and advocates have already debunked their claim. [Click here for the full analysis from Acadia Center.](#)