

National Caucus of Environmental Legislators

2020 Annual Report



A Message From NCEL’s President

Despite the challenges we all faced during 2020, this year remained pivotal for advancing environmental policies and was a remarkable year of growth for NCEL.

This year, NCEL grew to 10 full time staff and four Senior Advisors, conducted its first strategic planning process, and expanded the Board of Directors. This growth has expanded NCEL’s ability to ensure we meet the moment and expand our ability to support legislators advancing strong environmental policies.

States continue to lead on climate and environmental policy and will play a crucial role in the year to come. As political power shifts in Washington, DC, states remain consistent in their focus on environmental protections. As we head into 2021 and a new decade, I look forward to the incredible accomplishments ahead for state legislators that NCEL will facilitate. Thank you for your continued hard work and support!



Beth Kerttula
Former Alaska House Minority Leader
Former Director, National Ocean Council
NCEL President

A Message from the Executive Director

The NCEL staff are privileged to serve state environmental champions across the country. As we entered the 2020 legislative session, state legislators were poised to continue pushing forward bold environmental policies. However, 2020 was not the year we were expecting. When the COVID-19 pandemic hit, many states ended or shifted their legislative sessions, priorities changed, and NCEL’s work had to adapt accordingly. And as protests against racism and inequity erupted around the world, NCEL deepened its commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion, and worked to better incorporate environmental justice throughout its program work.

Throughout the year, NCEL innovated to meet the moment through facilitated remote briefings, virtual regional convenings, and our National Forum that we hosted online. NCEL staff continued to provide legislators with the information, connections, and resources they needed to move environmental policies forward. As a result, and even with the pandemic raging, states passed legislation aimed at reducing plastic pollution, protecting wildlife, prohibiting offshore drilling, and transitioning to clean energy.

Heading into NCEL’s 25th anniversary, staff are eager to help state legislators continue raising the bar on environmental action in 2021. Thank you for your continued support!



Jeff Mauk
Executive Director

NCEL BOARD OF DIRECTORS

The Honorable Beth Kerttula
Former State Representative, Alaska
President

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VP State Policy, Advanced Energy Economy
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State Representative, North Carolina

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The Honorable Brenda Gilmore
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NCEL TEAM



Alayna Chune
MS River Coordinator



Jane Krentz
Senior Advisor



Ruth Musgrave
Conservation Senior Advisor



Ashley Kellner
Operations Manager



Kate Burgess
Conservation Coordinator



Salvatore Messina
Development Officer



Clara Summers
Climate & Energy Manager



Melissa Nadeau
Senior Advisor



Yinka Bode-George
Environmental Health Manager



Dylan McDowell
Deputy Director



Taylor Anderson
Communications Manager

Mission

The National Caucus of Environmental Legislators empowers a nonpartisan network of legislative champions to protect, conserve, and improve the natural and human environment.

Vision

State leadership advances a clean and healthy environment for all.

Values



Everyone
Should Benefit



Opportunity



States Matter



Diversity, Equity,
and Inclusion




Nonpartisanship


States matter because action happens in the states.

States are often referred to as the laboratories of democracy. Many of America’s landmark federal laws originated as, or were inspired by, state policies. Empowering state legislators can ensure groundbreaking environmental policies not just for states, but also the nation, making NCEL’s mission crucial.


How We Work




Research - Provide facts, resources, and connect legislators with scientific research on current environmental issues.



Educate - Connect legislators to leading experts and their legislative colleagues to stay informed about environmental issues.



Convene - Founded by and for state legislators, we bring together legislators within states, regions, & across the country.



Empower - Foster collaboration across state lines to promote multi-state learning and action.

As states increasingly feel the impacts of climate change, fight federal deregulation of key environmental protections, and have a growing awareness and action on systemic racism, NCEL and its members know their work is more critical than ever before.

During 2020, NCEL conducted its first strategic planning process to ensure that we could best leverage our capacity and meet this moment to maximize our members’ impact.

This strategic planning process resulted in the creation of six strategic goals that will guide NCEL’s work for the next three years and beyond. The plan is designed to continually adapt to better center diversity, equity, inclusion, and anti-racism in the entire organization and throughout all of its program work.

How does NCEL best leverage its capacity and its unique position to meet the moment and help members to maximize their impact?

Goal #1

Enable NCEL’s network of environmental champions to lead and create significant impact on top environmental issues.

Goal #2

Expand and sustain a diverse and inclusive network of state legislators who strongly identify as part of NCEL.

Goal #3

Refresh, update, and expand NCEL programs and resources to meet the evolving needs of its members, especially in regard to diversity, equity, and inclusion and working across the aisle in a time of increased partisanship.

Goal #4

Be seen by members, partners, funders, media sources, and environmental policymakers as a go-to resource for environmental policy trends and as the point of access to state legislators working on environmental issues.

Goal #5

Diversify and develop a sustainable funding model that allows NCEL to grow, have control over its agenda and priorities, and increase long-term stability.

Organization Capacity Goal

Ensure that NCEL has the capacity it needs to successfully achieve its strategic goals.


Read the full [Strategic Plan Overview](#)

2020 Highlights



1,326

NCEL Members




9

working groups

148









working group members



16

monthly meetings

Bills Passed

-  4 states passed **single-use plastic** bills
-  4 states passed **PFAS** bills
-  3 states passed **wildlife corridor** bills
-  2 states passed **flame retardant** bills
-  2 states & DC passed **wildlife trafficking** bills
-  2 states passed **endangered species** bills
-  1 state passed an **oil-drilling** ban
-  1 state passed a **100% clean energy** bill

Before COVID...

8 states visited





27

virtual events

with over 300 attendees

2

sign-on letters

with over 450 signatures



Grew from 7 to

10

Staff Members






50

media mentions

1st

virtual National Forum




140

National Forum Attendees

Attendees from

36

States



47

First-term Legislators

62

First time attendees

Fulfilled

175+

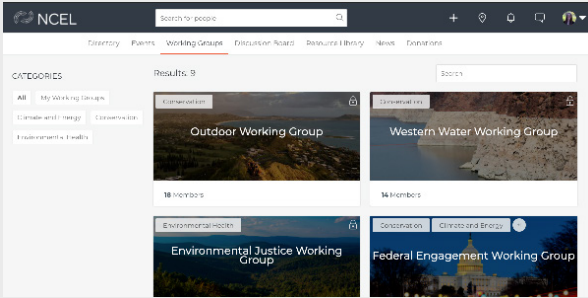
legislators' requests for assistance



2020 Issue Spotlights

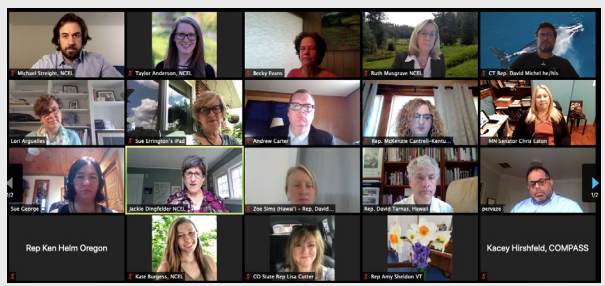
Creation of Working Groups

NCEL launched issue specific working groups to increase members' opportunities for collaboration. These groups are designed to provide monthly meetings for legislators to get together, share ideas, and learn from one another. NCEL also launched an online community platform, Hivebrite, to organize legislators and allow them to remain in contact with each other, view resources, and share ideas.




Conservation

Legislators advanced wildlife protections across the country in 2020, including the passage of new **wildlife corridor** bills and more states banning **wildlife trafficking**. The COVID-19 pandemic caused a lot of legislator interest in **wildlife diseases**. NCEL has hosted multiple briefings on the topic and developed new resources.




Climate and Energy

NCEL continued working with legislators on **coastal protections and offshore drilling** legislation leading to the passage of one bill. NCEL brought together legislators in the Southwest region to outline a joint energy strategy for the future. This convening inspired similar work in the Mid-Atlantic region. Staff continues to educate legislators on **carbon pricing** and the **Transportation and Climate Initiative (TCI)**.



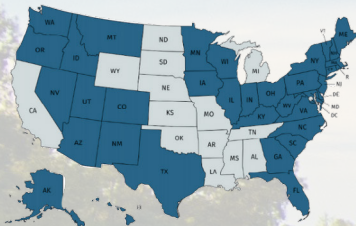
Environmental Health

Plastic pollution remained a major focus throughout 2020 with victories such as the comprehensive ban in New Jersey. NCEL started an **extended producer responsibility (EPR)** for packaging network and is coordinating a group of legislators looking to introduce legislation. NCEL is continuing to increase its work and focus on **environmental justice** in all program areas.

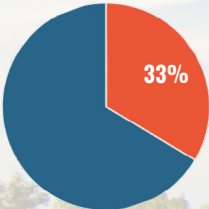


On August 6-7, 140 state legislators from 36 states convened online for NCEL’s 2020 National Forum. The event provided state lawmakers the opportunity to collaborate on policy solutions related to environmental justice, climate, energy, conservation, and environmental health.

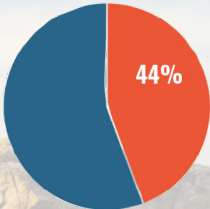
140 total attendees



36 states



47 first term legislators



62 first time attendees

This year’s National Forum featured multiple sessions on environmental justice and ensuring that policies benefit communities equitably. Former Department of Interior Secretary Ken Salazar delivered a keynote address on how conservation and environmental issues intersect with social justice, economic recovery, and much more. Secretary Salazar also focused on the importance of bipartisan cooperation in securing a healthy environment for all.

Other session topics included circular economy, PFAS toxic chemicals, sustainable food systems, habitat connectivity, 30x30 land conservation, utility planning, and more. The forum also featured a session on reducing single-use plastics, which included an address by Senator Tom Udall, author of the Break Free From Plastic Pollution Act (BFFPA). He emphasized the crucial role states play and how state action to reduce plastic pollution spurred and provided blueprints for the introduction of the federal BFFPA.

NCEL Annual Award Winners

During the event, NCEL presented its annual Rising Environmental Leader and Environmental Achievement Awards. The Rising Environmental Leader Award recognizes outstanding environmental leadership in a first- or second-term legislator. Named for NCEL’s founder, the Leon G. Billings Environmental Achievement Award celebrates legislative careers noted for extensive environmental success and impact.

Rising Environmental Leaders

Environmental Achievement Awards



Park Cannon
State Representative
Georgia



Angelica Rubio
State Representative
New Mexico



Rick Hansen
State Representative
Minnesota

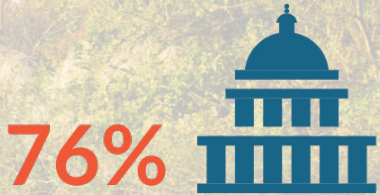
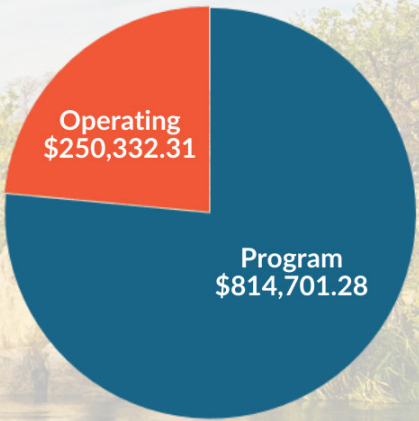


Chuck McGrady
State Representative
North Carolina



Christine Rolfes
State Senator
Washington

Thank you for empowering state environmental action!



76%

of our expenses went directly to informing, convening, and collaborating with state legislators

Financial Overview

Revenue	
Grants	\$1,046,350.00
Event Sponsorship	\$4,517.34
Individual Contributions	\$8,161.25
TOTAL REVENUE	\$1,060,171.32
Expenses	
Annual Forum	\$5,617.29
Climate & Energy	\$247,342.16
Conservation	\$300,310.02
Environmental Health	\$261,431.81
Program Expenses	\$814,701.28
General & Administrative	\$227,371.72
Fundraising	\$22,960.59
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$1,065,033.59

You can help support NCEL's work by becoming a sustaining member or making a one-time tax-deductible donation. For more information on donating visit ncel.net/donate or contact NCEL's Development Officer Salavatore Messina at smessina@ncel.net.



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