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New Book Arms Policymakers, Lawyers, Private Sector With Tools to Combat Climate Change in the United States

Nationwide Network of Lawyers Forming to Turn Recommendations Into Action

Washington, D.C.—With Democrats and Republicans arguing over the virtues and pitfalls of a Green New Deal, and with President Trump’s latest budget proposal cutting many environment- and energy-related programs, climate change policy in the United States is as divisive as ever. But a [comprehensive new resource](#) from leading climate attorneys released Monday lays out a myriad of legal pathways available to policymakers at every level of government and in private governance to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

The book, [Legal Pathways to Deep Decarbonization in the United States](#), details more than 1,000 recommendations covering a range of policy areas to reduce GHG emissions by at least 80% from 1990 levels by 2050. Top environmental lawyers [Michael B. Gerrard](#), Director of the Sabin Center for Climate Change Law at Columbia University, and [John C. Dernbach](#), Director of the Environmental Law and Sustainability Center at Widener University, edited the book.

“Many technologies required to make radical reductions in greenhouse gas emissions already exist, but there are numerous hurdles to deploying them at the scale and speed that climate change demands,” explained Gerrard. “*Legal Pathways* identifies these impediments and offers legal strategies to surmount them.”

Added Dernbach, “Our hope is that policymakers and lawyers can pursue the legal pathways identified in this book, choosing the approaches that work best for their situation, to effectively reduce greenhouse gas emissions in a way that also creates jobs, fosters economic development, and improves quality of life.”

Notably, *Legal Pathways* is not just a 1,120-page tome on a shelf, but the cornerstone of a sustained legal effort that aims to result in actual emissions reductions. In addition to publishing the book, Gerrard and Dernbach are working with [Richard Horsch](#), Retired Partner/Of Counsel at the international law firm of White & Case LLP, to organize a national network of lawyers who will donate their time to help turn the recommendations into model laws, regulations, and guidance. Gerrard and Dernbach are also developing an online hub to make the resulting legal work product and other resources freely available to lawyers, advocates, and policymakers.

“As we increasingly face the threat and reality of climate change and its inevitable impact on our most vulnerable populations, this book provides the best and most current thinking on viable options for the future to address and ameliorate a vexing, worldwide challenge of extraordinary magnitude,” said John Cruden, past

Assistant Attorney General, Environment and Natural Resources Division, U.S. Department of Justice.

The book is based on two reports by the Deep Decarbonization Pathways Project (DDPP) that explain technical and policy pathways for reducing U.S. greenhouse gas emissions by at least 80% from 1990 levels by 2050. This 80x50 target and similarly aggressive carbon abatement goals are often referred to as “deep decarbonization” because they require systemic changes to the energy economy.

Legal Pathways details 35 different topics in as many chapters covering energy efficiency and conservation; electricity decarbonization; liquid fuel (gasoline and oil) decarbonization; carbon capture and negative emissions; non-carbon dioxide climate pollutants; and a variety of cross-cutting issues. The legal options involve federal, state, and local law, as well as private governance. Authors included *all* legal options, even if they do not now seem politically realistic or likely, giving *Legal Pathways* not just immediate value, but also value over time. Each chapter is reviewed by a subject matter expert and each is peer-reviewed.

The book includes a unique feature—an index of recommendations organized by actor. This index allows local governments, state public utility commissions, and other actors to easily find all of the recommendations that are available to them, regardless of the chapter in which they are located. While both the scale and complexity of deep decarbonization are enormous, this book has a simple message: deep decarbonization is achievable in the United States using our existing laws and legal framework. These legal tools can provide significant economic, social, environmental, and national security benefits.

Michael B. Gerrard and John C. Dernbach are available for interviews.

The Environmental Law Institute will host a formal book launch in Washington, D.C., on April 25. For more information, visit: <https://www.eli.org/events/action-agenda-legal-pathways-deep-decarbonization-united-states>.

For additional information, including the table of contents and list of contributing authors, visit: <https://www.eli.org/DeepDecarbonization>.

For those interested in just a summary of the book’s top recommendations, visit: <https://www.eli.org/DeepDecarbKeyRecommendations>.

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Michael B. Gerrard is the Andrew Sabin Professor of Professional Practice at Columbia Law School, where he teaches courses on environmental and energy law, and founded and directs the Sabin Center for Climate Change Law. He is also a member and former Chair of the Faculty of Columbia’s Earth Institute. Since 1986, Professor Gerrard has written an environmental law column for the *New York Law Journal*. He is author or editor of 13 books, two of which were named *Best Law Book of the Year* by the Association of American Publishers: *Environmental Law Practice Guide* (12 volumes, 1992) and *Brownfields Law and Practice* (four volumes, 1998).

John C. Dernbach is the Commonwealth Professor of Environmental Law and Sustainability at Widener University Commonwealth Law School in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, and Director of its Environmental Law and Sustainability Center. Professor Dernbach has written widely on sustainable development, climate change, and environmental law, and has authored, coauthored, or contributed chapters to more than 20 books. Three of his books are comprehensive assessments of U.S. progress toward sustainability, including recommendations for future efforts.

For more information about ELI Press, the book division of the Environmental Law Institute, please contact Rachel Jean-Baptiste at jean-baptiste@eli.org.

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