

Gubernatorial candidate Ben Downing calls for 100% clean energy by 2040 in climate plan



BOSTON MA. FEBRUARY 8:
Benjamin Downing, former democratic state senator from Pittsfield, walks along Constitution Beach after he announced he is entering the gubernatorial race on February 8, 2021 in Boston, MA.
(Staff Photo By Nancy Lane/MediaNews Group/Boston Herald)

By **LISA**

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Gubernatorial candidate Ben Downing would push Massachusetts to 100% clean energy by 2040 — a decade before the net-zero emissions target set in the sweeping climate law Gov. Charlie Baker signed last month.

Downing, a Democrat and former state senator who co-chaired the Legislature's energy committee before joining renewable energy company Nexamp, rolled out the accelerated climate plan Wednesday as the first plank in his gubernatorial policy platform.

"For years, the Massachusetts state government has approached climate change with sluggishness and delay," Downing said in a statement. "It's past time we had a governor who understands the fierce urgency of our changing climate."

State law requires greenhouse gas emissions to be at least 50% lower than 1990 levels by 2030, at least 75% lower by 2040 and at least 85% lower by 2050. To reach net-zero emissions by 2050, the state will have to make up the remainder through strategies like carbon banking.

Instead of a strategy that allows fossil fuel emitters to continue operating, Downing is calling for 100% clean energy by 2030 and an "ambitious goal" of 100% clean energy for non-electricity demands — heating, cooling, transportation — by 2040. He'd achieve that through electric vehicle incentives, a "Race to Zero" competitive municipal grant program and more.

"Every day we don't act with that sense of urgency, then the cost and the scale of what we have to do in a shortened period of time becomes that much tougher," Downing said in a video.

Downing would also require 50% of all climate spending to directly benefit environmental justice communities, to "build a better reality" and "rectify the harm" to neighborhoods that've had "fossil fuel infrastructure foisted on them for years."

Downing, the sole Democrat officially in the race to date, rolled out his climate proposal Wednesday after technical issues marred the launch of his "Ben TV" policy video series Tuesday.