

**BRIEF**

Proposed fossil fuel moratorium derails 100% Virginia clean energy bill

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Dive Brief:

- Virginia legislators rejected an energy bill on Thursday that would have mandated all electric generation sold after 2036 come from clean energy.
- The bill was voted down 86-12 by the state's House of Delegates just two days after it was introduced and would have established a moratorium on state approval of any fossil fuel developments, including the controversial Atlantic Coast pipeline. Amendments to the bill that would have likely pushed it through the House's narrow Republican majority were rejected before the bill made it to the floor, Delegate Danika Roem, D, who voted against the bill, told Utility Dive.
- One of the amendments would have done away with the fossil fuel moratorium, which Republicans opposed, and eliminating it from the bill would have likely assuaged their concerns, she said. "Politics got in the way ...This was not a good faith effort to make it a good bill," said Roem.

Dive Insight:

A number of states and localities have committed to ambitious clean energy goals in recent months, including Virginia's

neighbor, the District of Columbia, which in December passed the most aggressive clean energy mandate in the country of 100% renewables by 2032.

"We need to develop a concrete plan to implement, to get to 100% clean energy," Delegate Sam Rasoul, D, who introduced the bill on Tuesday, told Utility Dive. "It's clear the administration needs to act soon ... People think we need to be taking bigger steps."

"I applaud Rasoul for his efforts," said Roem. "We need to be serious about dealing with clean energy and transitioning ... Hopefully in 2020 there will be a deal based on good policy," rather than politics she added.

Conversation on the campaign trail leading up to last fall's election indicated that Gov. Ralph Northam, D, would be supportive of a clean energy bill, according to Rasoul, but the bill's language as it stood should not have reached the floor to begin with said Roem.

A key portion of the bill would have placed a moratorium on all state level advancement of any fossil fuel facility, pipeline, terminal or refinery "unless preempted by applicable federal law." Refining this portion to focus on the clean energy mandate was among the proposed amendments that were shot down.

Pipeline development in Virginia has been a tumultuous topic among state regulators and in December, the attorney general filed suit against Mountain Valley Pipeline and Atlantic Coast Pipeline developers, saying the companies were not compliant with a number of state environmental regulations.

Leading up to the 100% clean energy by 2036 mandate, the bill would have required that 80% of electricity sold from 2028 to 2035 come from clean energy resources.

Last week, Northam reached an agreement with Republican and Democratic members of the state House and Senate to move forward on a bill that would require Dominion Energy to completely excavate all its coal ash, a sign of some bipartisan cooperation on energy policy in the state.

Several Republican delegates contacted by Utility Dive to discuss the clean energy bill, did not respond by press time.