

Dr. Leah Stokes ([00:02](#)):

I am not sure if you've heard this, Katharine, but I think there's an election coming up.

Dr. Katharine Wilkinson ([00:05](#)):

I did hear that Leah, and it's a big one for the climate. We need to make serious progress in the next four years to keep our hope of a better future within reach.

Dr. Leah Stokes ([00:15](#)):

But there's also a tendency to think that what happens at the federal level is all that matters.

Dr. Katharine Wilkinson ([00:20](#)):

It makes sense why people might think that. The presidential election dominates the news cycle.

Dr. Leah Stokes ([00:26](#)):

And don't get me wrong, the president matters a lot, but regardless of who runs the federal government, there are other places where we can make a big difference. Places where we can cut pollution and build thriving healthy communities.

Dr. Katharine Wilkinson ([00:39](#)):

We call them the states.

Dr. Leah Stokes ([00:44](#)):

So today we're going to tell a story of state level climate action and we're going to zoom in on one state in particular.

Dr. Katharine Wilkinson ([00:52](#)):

Where are we headed on this road trip, Leah?

Dr. Leah Stokes ([00:54](#)):

Well, we're headed to a state that has been leading the way on climate. In 2023, the state passed a clean electricity standard that requires 100% of the power system to be carbon free by 2040. It's one of the strongest laws in the nation.

Dr. Katharine Wilkinson ([01:09](#)):

Ooh. I do love a good clean electricity standard.

Dr. Leah Stokes ([01:12](#)):

And since that law was passed, this state has also committed \$2 billion to make that 2040 target possible. They've boosted clean transportation, worked on clean buildings, environmental justice, and so much more, and they've also revamped their state permitting process to make it easier to build clean energy and connect it to the grid. I'll give you a hint. Their governor has been in the news a lot lately.

Dr. Katharine Wilkinson ([01:37](#)):

Are we headed to the land of 10,000 lakes? AKA Minnesota.

Dr. Leah Stokes ([01:41](#)):

You guessed right.

Dr. Katharine Wilkinson ([01:43](#)):

Well that makes a lot of sense Leah, because I've heard that over the last couple of years, Minnesota has taken more bold climate action than perhaps any other state in the nation.

Dr. Leah Stokes ([01:56](#)):

Welcome back to A Matter of Degrees. I'm Dr. Leah Stokes.

Dr. Katharine Wilkinson ([02:00](#)):

And I'm Dr. Katharine Wilkinson.

Dr. Leah Stokes ([02:02](#)):

And today we're going to hear the story of how a powerful grassroots movement and forward-thinking politicians turned Minnesota into a climate leader.

Aimee Witteman ([02:14](#)):

So I, I'm a bit obsessed with Minnesota and the Midwest.

Dr. Leah Stokes ([02:18](#)):

That's Aimee Witteman, who I work with at Rewiring America, where she's the vice president of network. And before that she worked at the Department of Energy and also at the Minnesota based McKnight Foundation, where she designed and led their Midwest climate and energy program for over a decade.

Aimee Witteman ([02:37](#)):

I grew up in northern Wisconsin and I married a Minnesotan and the Midwest has always featured really prominently one way or another in my life and career. It's the highest greenhouse gas emitting region in the country on a per capita basis, given its heavy agriculture, industry, and a historical reliance on coal. And it's also, you know, it's a part of flyover country, which is why I love it. For so long the focus of the clean energy transition has been or had been on the coasts, California, New York, Massachusetts leading the way, and yet the Midwest is where most of the emissions are. And by the way, every four years the Midwest plays an instrumental role in where we go as a country. I am very biased. I think the Midwest is where it's at <laugh>.

([03:30](#)):

When I think about our work in Minnesota in the Midwest, I think about something that one of my favorite writers and thinkers says, uh, Rebecca Solnit. And she says that societal transformation often occurs gradually despite our expectation for quick results, she says that true power for change lies in grassroots movements campaigns and ordinary people who persistently advocate for their ideals over time. And so if you take the hundred percent clean energy bill that Governor Walz signed into law in early 2023 and look backwards, or if you look at the Inflation Reduction Act and look backwards in time, I really see these as stories of a grassroots movement that we built over years of ordinary people persistently advocating over time.

Dr. Katharine Wilkinson ([04:22](#)):

These big wins, they don't happen overnight and they don't come from the top down even when it seems like they do. They come from real people working really freaking hard over years and years to make change happen.

Aimee Witteman ([04:36](#)):

None of this was inevitable. We created a movement fueled by organized grassroots power and worked in every venue with every constituency and every angle you could think of. I loved the tagline of the hundred percent campaign in Minnesota, the campaign organized and led by the amazing Chris Conry. The tagline was to change everything we need everyone.

Chris Conry ([05:01](#)):

Minnesota has this very, very robust sort of civic life that is still pretty darned earnest and it's not just Democrats, it's kind of across the political spectrum. We have a very, very healthy civic space in Minnesota, which has changed my life.

Dr. Leah Stokes ([05:21](#)):

That's Chris Conry, the organizer that Aimee just mentioned. He's the managing director of 100% a Minnesota based advocacy group that led the movement for the clean electricity law.

Dr. Katharine Wilkinson ([05:33](#)):

Chris has been an organizer for decades, but it wasn't until a few years ago that he joined the climate movement.

Chris Conry ([05:39](#)):

It must have been early 2017. Uh, there was a March for Climate in Minnesota and my now senior in high school daughter at that point was in elementary school and she spoke at the March for Climate. And I remember seeing her on stage giving this speech and I thought, oh my gosh, if I go to the end of my career and I never do any work on climate, I'm gonna wonder what I was doing with my time.

Dr. Leah Stokes ([06:12](#)):

So Chris got to work. Over the next six years, he ran one of the most successful state climate campaigns in American history and it culminated in Minnesota's 100% clean electricity law and a whole lot of other smart climate policies.

Dr. Katharine Wilkinson ([06:27](#)):

Our diehard listeners may recall, we did a whole episode on clean electricity standards back in 2021. And the deal with that policy is basically that electric utilities are required to draw more and more of their power from clean sources like solar, like wind every year until they reach 100% clean generation and in this case in 2040.

Dr. Leah Stokes ([06:50](#)):

So let's walk through what made Chris and the 100% campaign so successful.

Dr. Katharine Wilkinson ([06:57](#)):

First things first, they found clever ways to motivate and to message, bringing people together around a simple but often overlooked idea, the power of the positive.

Chris Conry ([07:08](#)):

We had a commitment to what we would call a big yes campaign. So for a variety of important historic reasons, the environmental movement is very good at stopping bad things and has spent a lot of years preventing things from getting cut down or preventing rivers from being dammed. We wanted to have something that was about what we're for. So a commitment to big yes. We did not subscribe to the theory that what motivates people is climate panic, but rather what motivates people is a vision of the future.

Dr. Katharine Wilkinson ([07:41](#)):

I love that so much. Here's the thing, climate change is profoundly sad and scary and I think we have to honor that while also not getting stuck in the narratives of terrible, horrible, no good, very bad, that only make our overwhelm and a sense of why bother worse than it already is. And if we want people to come to this climate party and we do, we have to emphasize positive ways that we can heal our planet.

Dr. Leah Stokes ([08:12](#)):

I think that's spot on. And it's the exact same attitude that this coalition in Minnesota was bringing. They thought that they could improve the world, not just make it less bad.

Dr. Katharine Wilkinson ([08:23](#)):

As folks started to get on board, Chris and his team, they did another simple but powerful thing. They listened to people, they really met them where they were.

Dr. Leah Stokes ([08:33](#)):

And it wasn't just a bunch of environmental organizations, right? The 100% campaign brought in community groups and environmental justice groups and faith-based groups and labor groups and many more.

Chris Conry ([08:46](#)):

There's a variety of things that get people to stick together and it's different for different organizations. I'd say for the most part it was about trying to find a way to meet at least most of people's interests over time. It's like being in relationship with people, hearing them out, negotiating and trying to keep folks in the game with you.

Dr. Katharine Wilkinson ([09:08](#)):

And while many of these organizations had different priorities, different motivations, they all came together around the idea of a 100% clean electricity standard, because it's about so much more than just reducing pollution, healthier communities, good jobs, and making the economy more fair for everyone.

Dr. Leah Stokes ([09:28](#)):

And that's how they got their team assembled. Off they went to the state capitol.

Chris Conry ([09:33](#)):

So basically in every session we would have a big lobby day where literally hundreds of people would come and talk about this issue. And as we launched, we made a really intentional effort to make sure policy makers were hearing from constituents and that really solidified its positioning for the next five years that that session to where it was clearly a priority within the Democratic caucus in the house.

Dr. Katharine Wilkinson ([09:56](#)):

This was just one of the many initiatives they led to get folks engaged in politics, getting in there and speaking about what they believed in directly to their representatives in the state government.

Dr. Leah Stokes ([10:07](#)):

This wasn't just a political movement, it was a social movement and a cultural movement.

Chris Conry ([10:14](#)):

Over the course of the campaign, I think we hosted three different concerts. We published an annual planner, we did different series of like beautifully designed postcards that we would mail people through the election season. We actually produced an art installation. We literally, in our first year, we hosted a comedy show about climate change. So we were in a bar with comics cracking jokes, that spirit and sense of optimism and sense of like, we're gonna do something big together if we all do it together. It was unique and it was powerful and it made people want to hang out with us.

Dr. Katharine Wilkinson ([10:51](#)):

This is making me wanna hang out with them too.

Dr. Leah Stokes ([10:54](#)):

You know, I've seen this a lot in my own work. It's relationships that keep people moving forward together.

Dr. Katharine Wilkinson ([11:00](#)):

Absolutely. And when that policymaking window opened, the 100% coalition was ready.

Dr. Leah Stokes ([11:07](#)):

The Democratic Farmer Labor Party. Yes, that's a Minnesota thing and we're gonna tell you more about it later. They won a trifecta in the 2022 elections, controlling both the house and the Senate and they had Governor Tim Walz at the helm.

Chris Conry ([11:22](#)):

There was across the board a lot of pent up demand for change, which the state had not been able to execute at scale for a decade.

Dr. Katharine Wilkinson ([11:31](#)):

They knew this was their moment.

Chris Conry ([11:35](#)):

We'd had five years to figure out what the policy was and build consensus around it and get people bought in and explain it to people. But when it came time to hit go, the strategy was to move very, very quickly.

Dr. Leah Stokes ([11:48](#)):

Which brings us to the Minnesota legislature. This is the place where the campaign's idea, it could actually be turned into law. And to tell this part of the story, we'll need to rewind back to the 2018 Minnesota State election.

Rep. Jamie Long ([12:02](#)):

I ran on climate, this was the issue that I talked most about in my campaign and it's been the issue that I've been focusing on ever since.

Dr. Katharine Wilkinson ([12:09](#)):

That's Jamie Long now, the majority leader of the Minnesota State House of Representatives. He authored the 100% clean electricity bill.

Dr. Leah Stokes ([12:17](#)):

Jamie had been working to push climate policy forward in Minnesota since he was first elected in 2018. It was before the 2022 midterms gave the Democratic Farmer Labor Party their governing trifecta. So they knew that this first bill, it wasn't going to pass, but they also knew that if they introduced it, it would show Minnesotans that they were ready to make a difference if voters supported them and gave them the majority.

Rep. Jamie Long ([12:45](#)):

There was a, an issue campaign appropriately called the hundred percent campaign that got started right when I was elected. And so we worked very closely together.

Dr. Katharine Wilkinson ([12:55](#)):

Jamie knew that if this policy was going to have a chance, they needed to bring as many people along as possible.

Dr. Leah Stokes ([13:01](#)):

And that didn't just mean turning out people who already supported climate action. It meant engaging with people who might be neutral or disengaged or even oppose the policy. And they had to show up to those conversations ready to find common ground.

Rep. Jamie Long ([13:16](#)):

Labor in particular was one that we had to work very hard to make sure that we were bringing them along and that they felt heard as a part of the process. There were some labor unions that saw themselves in climate right away. The electrical workers, for example, who who we knew were going to install a lot of solar panels, but then there were some local labor unions also that were representing coal plant workers and they knew that they were going to see some tough times in the transition and some job loss.

Dr. Katharine Wilkinson ([13:50](#)):

Good climate policy is ultimately good for all of us in the long term. Well-designed laws create jobs, they grow new industries, they protect communities, but that doesn't mean that everyone benefits right away.

Rep. Jamie Long ([14:03](#)):

We really wanted to highlight that this was going to be good for jobs and we knew that it would be on aggregate. Of course, that doesn't mean for every individual worker it will be. And so I think we don't want to gloss over that.

Dr. Leah Stokes ([14:18](#)):

Policies like Minnesota's 100% clean electricity goal, they come with hard questions about what happens to the people who are employed by fossil fuel plants.

Dr. Katharine Wilkinson ([14:28](#)):

Jamie knew that if this bill was going to have a chance at passing one day, they couldn't afford to put off those hard questions.

Rep. Jamie Long ([14:35](#)):

So I had a meeting with all of the local labor unions across the state that represented fossil fuel workers and to their credit, they understood that the clean energy transition was happening. And so they were looking for a fair deal. They wanted to make sure that we could put pressure on the companies to hire those workers who wanted to stay on or for folks who were nearing retirement, that they could get a fair path to retirement, for folks who were younger in the workforce so they could get some retraining.

Dr. Leah Stokes ([15:08](#)):

And this is what was key. They didn't offer to water down the policy.

Dr. Katharine Wilkinson ([15:11](#)):

And they didn't have to. Instead they went to the people who would be the most impacted and asked a really important question, how can I help?

Dr. Leah Stokes ([15:22](#)):

So fast forward to 2022 and Jamie Long has already introduced this 100% clean electricity bill twice.

Dr. Katharine Wilkinson ([15:31](#)):

And both times it's been voted down by a divided state government

Dr. Leah Stokes ([15:38](#)):

And then the midterms came around.

Rep. Jamie Long ([15:40](#)):

So we now had democratic control of state government for the first time in a decade, but it was narrow. So one of the things that I wanted to do was make sure that the opposition didn't have any time to work up a campaign against us. And so we went very fast. We introduced the bill right outta the gate week one, and we wound up passing the bill within a month.

Dr. Katharine Wilkinson ([16:03](#)):

It was a sprint.

Dr. Leah Stokes ([16:05](#)):

After a marathon decade of grassroots organizing. They had built the support and momentum and were persistent. So when the time came, they were ready on day one.

Rep. Jamie Long ([16:17](#)):

We hoped that they never, never saw it coming, that we were outta the gate fast enough. But I think also it was a testament to the amount of support that we'd built up.

Dr. Katharine Wilkinson ([16:26](#)):

And a testament to the broad movement sparked by Chris and the 100% Campaign.

Dr. Leah Stokes ([16:31](#)):

And it's no exaggeration to say that this is one of the most ambitious state level climate policies in the entire country.

Rep. Jamie Long ([16:40](#)):

The endpoint is a hundred percent clean energy by 2040. We also had some strong labor protections in the bill. So we included a prevailing wage requirement for all new renewable energy. So that means that you can't undercut the wages of good labor jobs in the clean energy sector. We had some important environmental justice provisions as well, making sure that the Public Utilities Commission could take into account environmental justice concerns when they were doing siting for projects. I'm really proud of the bill we put together.

Dr. Leah Stokes ([17:16](#)):

And as we've talked about in the past, a clean electricity standard does more than just clean up the grid. Electricity is going to power buildings and cars. So when we decarbonize our electricity system, we're also able to cut pollution from our homes, our buildings, factories, vehicles, clean electricity really is the cornerstone of a clean economy.

Dr. Katharine Wilkinson ([17:40](#)):

But even smart and ambitious climate laws like the Minnesota 100% bill, they can't do it alone. Those targets only work if we have a way to meet them. And Representative Jamie Long totally gets that. It's why he's been working overtime to make sure that the 2040 standard is backed by additional policies to build that clean electricity fast.

Rep. Jamie Long ([18:04](#)):

We definitely did not stop at a hundred percent. So this past year we passed a full scale rewrite of our transmission permitting process and the goal of having it be faster. Right now, it takes 10 years on average to get transmission built. And we knew that if we were gonna get there by 2040, that was too long.

Dr. Leah Stokes ([18:25](#)):

Minnesota's climate laws don't end with the electricity sector. They also updated their building codes to require new buildings to be cleaner every year. And they added rebates for people to buy electric cars invested millions in electric vehicle charging stations, set up a green bank to use federal dollars in clean energy projects. They also made low income housing more efficient and, a personal favorite of mine, they invested millions to put solar on school buildings across the state. They did a lot.

Dr. Katharine Wilkinson ([18:57](#)):

And in Minnesota, they're already starting to see the impacts of this whole suite of climate policies across the state. And that is something that Chris is pretty jazzed about.

Chris Conry ([19:11](#)):

So Minnesota's climate policies from '23 and '24 are starting to make a tangible difference in the lives of Minnesotans. And I think about it in a few different ways. One is there's obviously a set of family level

investments that are now easier for people. We set up everything from an electric panel upgrade program to incentives for electric bikes to programs that will help make it easier to own and operate a battery system. So there's a whole set of things that are at a sort of individual family level. People are hungry for it.

Dr. Katharine Wilkinson ([19:48](#)):

But our households and our families, that's just one venue for change. And so many of the key solutions are beyond our immediate control.

Chris Conry ([19:57](#)):

Secondly, I think there are a whole set of things that are happening right now at a community and institutional level that are making a difference. So more cities are doing climate action planning and resilience planning. As I drive around Minnesota, I can see the construction happening. We are building a bus rapid transit line along that street. More people are gonna be able to ride cleaner buses through my neighborhood because those laws passed.

Dr. Leah Stokes ([20:25](#)):

And remember that positive vision for the future that Chris told us about earlier, it has started to happen.

Chris Conry ([20:31](#)):

All of these things should mean cleaner air and water for Minnesotans and the ability to protect more of the natural resources that we all love in the state. It's no joke. I mean people here really, really care about the great outdoors and are very committed to protecting them. And this is actually not a Democratic or Republican thing. Every Minnesotan across the political spectrum is very proud of the place we live.

Dr. Katharine Wilkinson ([20:57](#)):

So why is Minnesota so good at this?

Dr. Leah Stokes ([20:59](#)):

It's a great question. You know, why isn't this happening in every state? If it's working so well there?

Dr. Katharine Wilkinson ([21:06](#)):

What's in the water in Minnesota?

Aimee Witteman ([21:07](#)):

Some of the things that make Minnesota unique are that it has a very strong history of civic engagement.

Dr. Leah Stokes ([21:15](#)):

That's Aimee Witteman, who you heard from earlier in the episode.

Aimee Witteman ([21:17](#)):

It routinely has the highest voter turnout in the country. It has the highest charitable giving in the country behind Iowa. The other thing that stands out with Governor Walz catapulting to the national scene is that many people have now heard these initials, DFL. It's the initials for the Democrat Farm Labor Party.

Dr. Katharine Wilkinson ([21:38](#)):

The original farmer Labor Party had a history of working on economic and social inequality and those values have carried forward in the DFL.

Dr. Leah Stokes ([21:46](#)):

And Aimee told us that's exactly where change starts in Minnesota, in the community.

Aimee Witteman ([21:53](#)):

This commitment to strong social policy and investment in things like public schools and public services. This level of civic engagement, this bit that Governor Walz has talked about that's now in memes about caring for your neighbor. That is a dimension of how you need to think about making change in a place like Minnesota. Neighbor to neighbor conversations. When you host a meeting on a topic like a hundred percent clean energy, people in Minnesota come to it.

Dr. Katharine Wilkinson ([22:21](#)):

These all seem like unique qualities that would make this strategy purpose built to work in Minnesota.

Dr. Leah Stokes ([22:29](#)):

So how can we take what we've learned from Minnesota to create change like this in other states?

Dr. Katharine Wilkinson ([22:34](#)):

We pose this very question to Aimee who has decades of experience working not just in Minnesota but at the state level all over the country.

Aimee Witteman ([22:44](#)):

I had the chance to go and help stand up the US State's policy program at the Climate Imperative Foundation. I worked at the Energy Foundation leading their states and regions program. So I've worked in other states. You gotta find the people who are on the ground first. I can't come in and say, I know the best way to make change here. I can come in with some good questions, I can come in with some ideas. When I was at the Department of Energy, we could come in with programs and offerings, but it always starts, no matter what state you are in, with gathering together the people who do show up to the coffee klatch and getting to know them and and starting to ask questions.

Dr. Katharine Wilkinson ([23:22](#)):

As Aimee says, building a strong coalition isn't about having all of the answers. It's about taking the time to ask good questions and build good relationships.

Dr. Leah Stokes ([23:31](#)):

And this is one of the lessons I'm taking away from the Minnesota story. At the heart of these climate wins is a strategy to create movements and policy that looks like the place where it's from. Inclusivity isn't just the right thing to do, it's the smart thing to do.

Dr. Katharine Wilkinson ([23:50](#)):

And that is definitely a lesson that we can use to replicate wins like this elsewhere.

Dr. Leah Stokes ([23:58](#)):

So let's zoom out a bit. How important is this for the bigger picture of climate action across the United States?

Aimee Witteman ([24:05](#)):

I'm very bullish on the role of states when it comes to climate progress and clean energy action. First, you just have the fact that states are key venues for a lot of the decisions that are made about the power sector. Decisions about the electricity mix are made in state legislatures, it's state PUCs at the regional transmission organizations. But to me it's something that is more dynamic than just that. And it's that states and cities, but states are really the test beds to build innovative models for policy and government investments. I think on clean energy, on many issues. But clean energy progress at the state level is what has laid the foundation for eventual federal action. This is where we have been at in the US over the last 20 years.

Dr. Katharine Wilkinson ([24:55](#)):

Which means there are certain areas of climate action that simply come down to state level policy.

Dr. Leah Stokes ([25:00](#)):

But that isn't the only importance of the states, right? As Aimee explained to us, these states are also testing grounds for the next big thing.

Aimee Witteman ([25:11](#)):

I would say that what we saw with the Inflation Reduction Act, you can trace that to action at the state level. So increasing investment in renewables, obviously the IRA because of reconciliation had to all be on the investment side of things. But the work in Minnesota laying the groundwork for the adoption of those technologies, this built the type of support where we had the demand for an Inflation Reduction Act. And then simultaneously, as there was a trifecta in Minnesota, the governor could sign into law a hundred percent clean energy bill, and now is poised to be able to absorb those tax credits. It has made Minnesota more competitive to attract resources to the state to build out the clean technology there. We obviously have further to go, there's much further we need to go at the federal level with regulations. But I think Inflation Reduction Act was a huge victory and I don't think we would've achieved it, both the policy or the power it was required to get it across the finish line, without all of the work that we'd been doing in the states for the last decade and a half.

Dr. Katharine Wilkinson ([26:28](#)):

So states play a huge role in US climate progress because they expand our definition of what is possible.

Dr. Leah Stokes ([26:34](#)):

When we have these positive examples at the state level, it not only shows us that these things are politically possible, it makes them easier to replicate.

Dr. Katharine Wilkinson ([26:43](#)):

Everybody loves a good role model and Minnesota is a great example of what it looks like to lead the next wave of climate action. But it's happening in other states too. The very same year that Minnesota passed, its 100% bill right across Lake Superior, Michigan passed a 2040 clean electricity standard of their own.

Dr. Leah Stokes ([27:04](#)):

And this means that the Midwest won't be the highest per capita polluter for much longer because momentum is building.

Aimee Witteman ([27:14](#)):

And you have your states that we always look to like California, New York. You know, some of the states that I'm most excited about right now include places like Maryland and Colorado. I'm really excited about this new clean heat standard in Colorado that they passed in May. This is an innovative policy establishing greenhouse gas reduction targets for gas distribution utilities. I think that's an example of like the next wave of policies that need to be passed at the state level that then can be the test bed, the example for eventual federal actions.

Dr. Katharine Wilkinson ([27:52](#)):

States push the boundaries of our political imagination. They build constituencies, they test and they prove the big ideas.

Aimee Witteman ([28:01](#)):

The sweet sauce of change, of durable change is this virtuous cycle where we have states pass ambitious clean energy laws or standards and they then position themselves to be on the front lines to receive federal funds. And then with those federal funds, states can deploy more clean energy at the household level, distributed utility scale. And then there's a constituency that is developed that can push for even more ambitious state action.

Dr. Katharine Wilkinson ([28:33](#)):

We grow the movement when people start experiencing the benefits of this legislation, people look at the state next to them, they see these benefits in action and they want them for themselves.

Dr. Leah Stokes ([28:44](#)):

And that's how state policy can make federal action even more impactful. You know, if the money is flowing from the Inflation Reduction Act into a state that also has a clean electricity standard, it goes farther because there's something to do with those dollars.

Dr. Katharine Wilkinson ([29:00](#)):

We need more than one tool to drive change on the scale that the climate crisis demands and getting really solid climate policy in the states that makes federal wins even stronger.

Dr. Leah Stokes ([29:11](#)):

And so we asked Aimee, now that we understand how important states are for climate policy, what should we be working towards next? Where does this leave us?

Aimee Witteman ([29:21](#)):

We need to be sure we win the win. We need to be sure that after we pass historic climate legislation that it is implemented well and there's so much that it takes to implement laws. Well, a law of this size and magnitude over the next seven years like this is gonna transform the economy. It's gonna transform the landscape, but it's all hands on deck. It's not just like moving to the next legislative fight. We have to be doing both things simultaneously, but we have to keep our eye on implementation and then we have to keep pushing because as much as we have accomplished, we still have to do more. It's still isn't going fast enough. But if we can get that flywheel going and keep it going and be able to chew gum and walk, I

think that not only will we be reducing emissions, we're gonna be improving people's lives in really, really demonstrable ways. This is about someone who is breathing pollutants from their gas stove, whose kid has asthma, no longer having that machine in their house.

Dr. Katharine Wilkinson ([30:30](#)):

Passing a policy is the middle of the story. It is not the end.

Dr. Leah Stokes ([30:33](#)):

And Minnesota is a great example of what is possible when you're able to get that virtuous cycle going. As we heard from Chris Conry and Jamie Long, the 100% law was only the beginning.

Dr. Katharine Wilkinson ([30:47](#)):

Since passing the clean electricity standard, they've added new investments to cut climate pollution from nearly every sector of the economy.

Dr. Leah Stokes ([30:56](#)):

Right, they didn't just pass one bill and pack up their bags and go home.

Dr. Katharine Wilkinson ([30:59](#)):

They made sure to win the win.

Dr. Leah Stokes ([31:02](#)):

And they showed us the enormous potential of state climate action.

Aimee Witteman ([31:08](#)):

Minnesota's a great story. There are lessons to be learned from Minnesota and there are things about Minnesota that are special to that place. And we need that type of ambition and action in every state in the country.

Dr. Leah Stokes ([31:21](#)):

To change everything, we need everyone.

Dr. Katharine Wilkinson ([31:26](#)):

And states jumpstart these virtuous cycles, building momentum towards a greener, brighter future for all of us.

Dr. Leah Stokes ([31:34](#)):

People can see what a clean energy future looks like and they get excited.

Dr. Katharine Wilkinson ([31:37](#)):

And that support speeds up the pace of change.

Dr. Leah Stokes ([31:41](#)):

And one of the best ways that we can speed up that progress is by electing climate champions from our state capitols to Capitol Hill, from the top of the ballot to the bottom. It all matters.

Dr. Katharine Wilkinson ([31:52](#)):

Down ballot races are so important, and it's no exaggeration to say that the fate of the planet is truly on the line in this election season. That's why Leah and I are gonna be taking a few weeks off to focus our attention on this moment.

Dr. Leah Stokes ([32:09](#)):

But we'll be back soon to talk about the next frontiers of decarbonization, how to clean up pollution from the industrial sector and what the outcome of the election is going to mean for all of us.

Dr. Katharine Wilkinson ([32:23](#)):

Until then, dear listeners, we'll see y'all at the polls.

Dr. Leah Stokes ([32:34](#)):

A Matter of Degrees is co-hosted by me, Dr. Leah Stokes.

Dr. Katharine Wilkinson ([32:38](#)):

And me, Dr. Katharine Wilkinson.

Dr. Leah Stokes ([32:41](#)):

We are a production made in partnership with FRQNCY Media, the 2035 Initiative at UC Santa Barbara, and the All We Can Save Project.

Dr. Katharine Wilkinson ([32:50](#)):

Thanks to our funders and supporters who make this show possible, including the 11th hour project. Special thanks to Fossil Free Media and the Make Polluters Pay campaign, which is working to hold big oil accountable for the damage they're doing to our climate and our communities. Find out more at makepolluterspay.net.

Dr. Leah Stokes ([33:08](#)):

And if you're digging the show, please hop on Apple Podcasts or Spotify and give us a five star rating. Or leave us a review.

Dr. Katharine Wilkinson ([33:15](#)):

Script writing, fact checking, communication and production support are by Lucas Boyd, Alex Dileo, Quinn Lewis, Christin Palmstrom, and Anusha Singh.

Dr. Leah Stokes ([33:24](#)):

At FRQNCY Media, Michelle Khouri is our executive producer. Lizzie Stewart is our producer and Claire Bidigare-Curtis is our editor and sound designer.

Dr. Katharine Wilkinson ([33:35](#)):

Rose Wong designed our show, art Sean Marquand composed our theme song and additional music came from Blue dot sessions.

Dr. Leah Stokes ([33:42](#)):

This transcript was exported on Oct 24, 2024 - view latest version [here](#).

Find us online at degreespod.com and [@degreespod](#) on the artist formally known as Twitter. And you can also find us on YouTube.

Dr. Katharine Wilkinson ([33:51](#)):

And stay tuned for more stories for the climate curious.

([34:02](#)):

<laugh> No, no more excitement. AKA Minnesota.

Dr. Leah Stokes ([34:07](#)):

Yes. I like to call it the Canada of America personally. <laugh>.