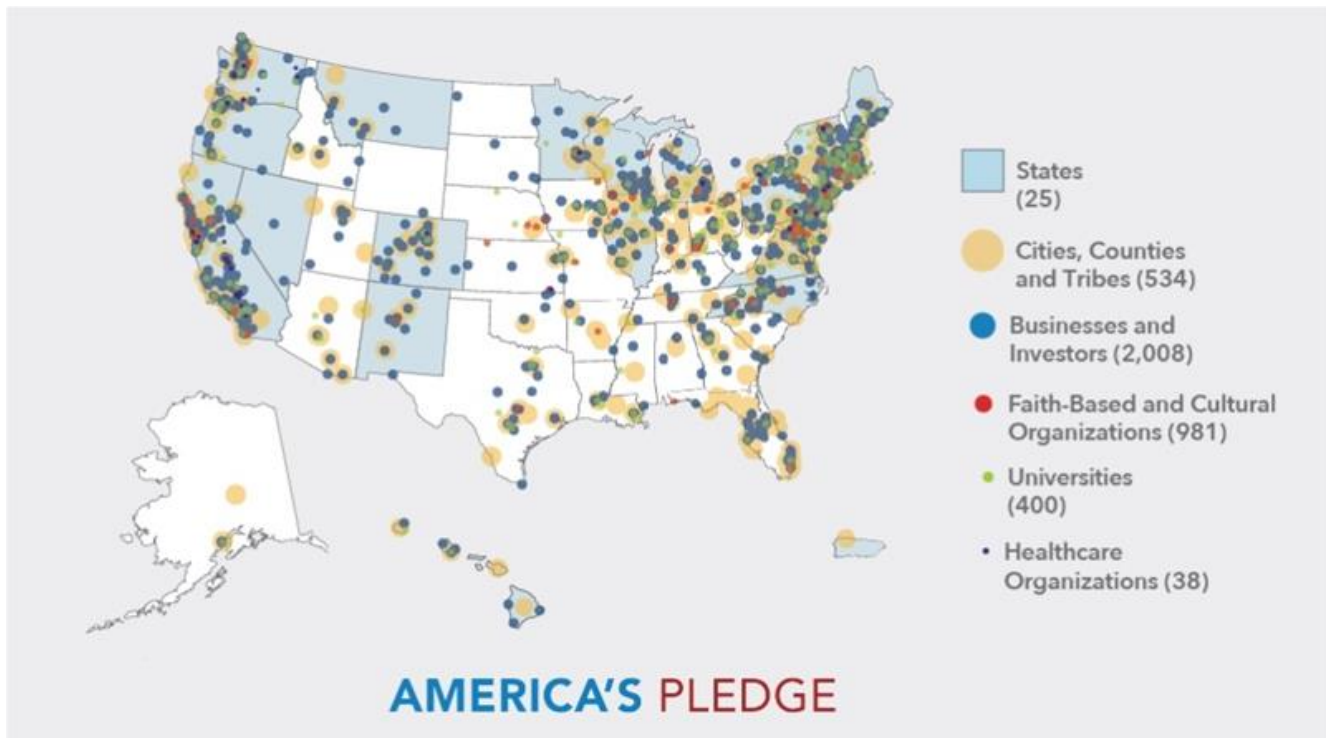


As Trump walks away from climate pact, America's Pledge steps up

With COP25 underway, broad coalition of US businesses, states and cities pushes for 'prosperous, low carbon economy'.

by [Ben Piven](#) 9 hours ago 12/9/19



From tribes and universities to faith-based and cultural groups, a wide-ranging coalition has effectively remained in the 2015 Paris climate agreement [America's Pledge]

Despite the formal process now under way to wrest the [United States](#) from the [Paris climate agreement](#), a powerful coalition of subnational actors is fighting to keep hope alive.

[America's Pledge](#) - a movement founded in 2017 to counteract the official push by US President [Donald Trump](#) in Washington against the landmark treaty to reverse [global warming](#) - released a comprehensive report in Madrid on Monday to maintain the momentum.

At the COP25 conference to combat [climate change](#), the group is fulfilling its purpose to

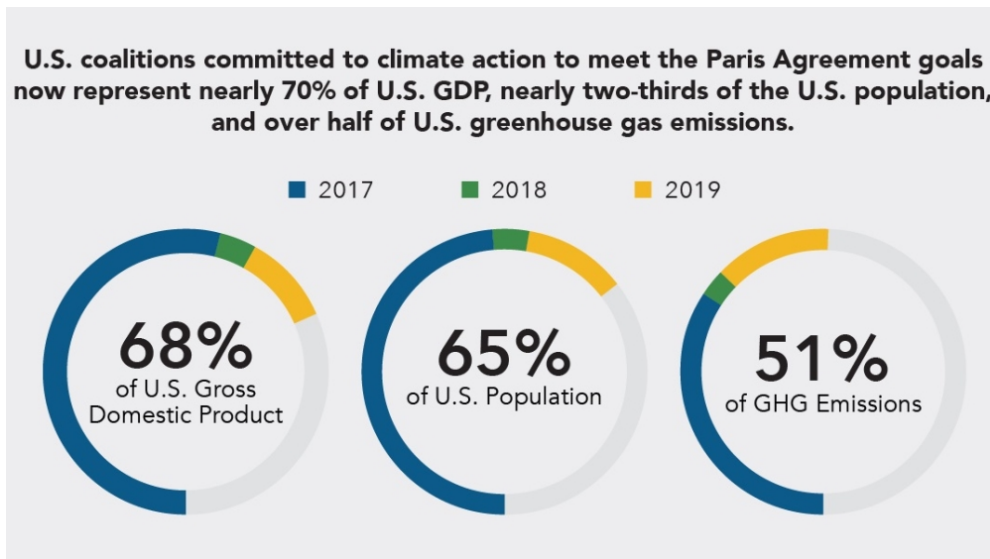
"build a prosperous, low carbon economy" in the shadows, for now, of Trump's efforts to halt progress on emissions-cutting programmes.

Geographically speaking, the coalition's supporters represent 68 percent of US economic output, 65 percent of the population and 51 percent of the country's emissions.

The group's goal is to reassert US leadership, as world delegates gather to enhance climate targets and ambitions - proposing two different pathways that would slash US emissions either 37 percent or 49 percent to 2030.

"Decarbonisation is already happening, and it's accelerating," said Carl Pope, the vice-chair of America's Pledge and the former executive director of the Sierra Club.

"The [demographic] percentage of US emissions that have signed up for Paris goals is past the halfway point," he said, referring to the bloc of states, cities and counties responsible for the majority of greenhouse gas pollution.



Areas of the United States committed to the Paris goals account for more than two-thirds of US gross domestic product [America's Pledge]

"Cleaner is now cheaper," Pope added, referring to decreasing US prices for renewable [energy](#). "In most sectors, we are no longer looking at a world where decarbonisation raises energy costs."

"For both coal and gas, in electricity, the clock is ticking," said Pope. "They are no longer competitive."

'Revolutionary change'

Pope also pointed out in a media briefing that he was personally surprised by how much progress has been attained in the US, even as Trump attempts to re-establish the dominance of [fossil fuel](#) companies - rather than wean off their fuels

by mid-century, which Pope views as very possible.

He believes that "revolutionary change" is afoot in the US, since some states striving to be climate champions are drastically tightening building codes, vehicle requirements and utility regulations.

The America's Pledge report is the product of a team of authors from the World Resources Institute, the Rocky Mountain Institute and the Center for Global Sustainability at the University of Maryland.

Nathan Hultman, director of CGS and a report co-author, pointed to a "remarkable groundswell of activity" in spite of setbacks at the federal level.

"Paris is the best architecture that we can imagine for coordinating

at the international level," Hultman told Al Jazeera, adding that his America's Pledge colleagues were "originally focused on national legislation" and "agreements to bind [country commitments] together".

Hultman said that "bottom-up climate action" will continue to happen, even in the absence of "robust politics" - the future prospect of a supportive executive branch and less gridlocked US Congress.

But with "all-in" federal engagement on broad-ranging policies, even more progress is feasible.

"There are economic benefits accruing," he added. "The transitions will result in lower bills for consumers."

"We're not just making this effort because of a religious, philosophical or theoretical idea," said Hultman, who is now attending his 15th COP "conference of the parties" climate meeting

organised by the United Nations. "We see that there is a real prize at the end. That's why we're all here in Madrid today and this week."

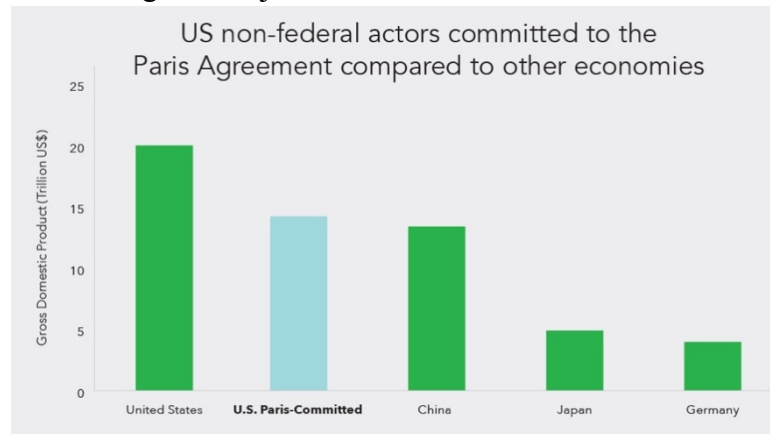
'Not a free rider'

In a pavilion at the gathering in [Spain](#), America's Pledge is joined by We Are Still In, Beyond Carbon and the World Wildlife Fund at the [US Climate Action Center](#) supported by Bloomberg Philanthropies.

The coalition includes tribes, faith groups and cultural institutions under the aegis of America's Pledge co-chairs: UN Special Envoy for Climate Action Mike Bloomberg and former California Governor Jerry Brown.

Because the US Department of State is sending just a small squad of diplomats to the annual UN climate talks, this coalition has [stepped into the void](#) to showcase what is being accomplished.

Hultman said the coalition is getting the climate message out to two domestic US audiences - those already taking action, and people considering how to join.



The part of the US population that has essentially complied with the 2015 Paris Agreement still represents the world's largest participating economy [America's Pledge]

Perhaps more importantly on the world stage, a global audience "sees that though the president pulled out of Paris, leaving the impression the US

is doing nothing ... the US is doing a lot and is not a free rider".

Carla Frisch, principal at RMI and co-author of the report, says that the assumptions for climate achievements after the next decade are not far-fetched: no coal plants at all, new buildings that are 100 percent electric, and electric vehicles that represent two-thirds of all new car sales.

Major strides in energy efficiency will be key, in addition to carbon capture developments and natural sinks for greenhouse gases, say environmental advocates.

But the report clarifies that "a massive effort will be needed to deploy these and other [technologies](#) at the speed and scale envisioned".

"Transforming our politics and our energy economy will require broad citizen mobilization, increased energy productivity, disruptive innovation, new market structures, and forward-thinking investment," it said.

The report also explains how a quick shift will bring societal gains, including lower electricity prices, public health improvements and reduction of climate damages incurred by local communities.

"In the two years since President Trump announced his intention to withdraw the United States from the Paris Agreement, nearly 4,000 U.S. cities, states, businesses, and universities have reaffirmed their commitment to helping America drive down emissions and answer the call of the international community to continue leading the global fight against the climate crisis," wrote Bloomberg and Brown in the report.

"Even if late, federal re-engagement can enable the United States to get back on track for full decarbonization by 2050."

SOURCE: Al Jazeera News **ABOUT THE AUTHOR** [Ben Piven](#) @ [benpiven](#)