

RENEWABLE ENERGY WILL CREATE A CLEANER AND CHEAPER ENERGY FUTURE FOR WYOMING

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We've heard a lot in Wyoming in recent months about energy subsidies or tax relief for oil, natural gas, coal, and nuclear power. It seems our state legislators and other policy-makers often support their energy of choice without considering the full impacts to public health, the environment, or even to those that have to pick up the bill for whatever energy projects are built in the state: Wyoming ratepayers.

How do we move beyond this dilemma, and is there a solution to our energy problems that can actually work? Energy experts across the country are starting to give us the answers. For instance, a new report released this week by the Civil Society Institute—and echoed in a new book by physicist and energy guru, Amory Lovins—outlines a realistic path to a cleaner energy future that will also be more affordable for U.S. taxpayers and citizens.

Rather than shifting risks from private business to the public, both publications point out, we should be looking to energy resources that offer the lowest risks both to the public and to private investors while reliably meeting electric energy demand.

The Synapse *Beyond Business as Usual* report persuasively makes the case for phasing out all coal-fired power and about 25 percent of the nuclear fleet by 2050, while phasing in aggressive energy efficiency and renewable energy investments.

The report compares status quo trends with a “Transition Scenario” that maps out a much cleaner energy future by 2050. The report demonstrates that the Transition Scenario is superior to the status quo in terms of public health, water usage, and carbon dioxide emission reductions. It also creates jobs.

However, the greatest savings achieved in the study is in the cost of generating electricity. Significant savings are achieved by eliminating new coal and nuclear plants and by gradually replacing all coal and a portion of the nuclear fleet with renewable energy—both wind and solar—and through comprehensive efficiency measures.

The report projects a net savings of \$83 billion over 40 years, with the added benefit that eliminating pollution from dirty coal-fired power plants by 2050 is expected to prevent somewhere around 55,000 premature deaths over the next several decades.

Now, it's easy to sit here in Wyoming, home of “king coal,” and be skeptical of these ideas. But the reality speaks for itself. Over 1400 megawatts of wind energy are currently being produced in Wyoming with another 6000 on the way. Utilities like Rocky Mountain Power are choosing wind over coal in the Cowboy State because it is cost effective and a least-risk option for ratepayers. Renewable energy has also been shown to

be good for business, as evidenced by the announcement this week that Green House Data will be expanding its wind-powered data center in Cheyenne.

And large-scale renewables aren't the only solution. Citizens across the state are installing rooftop solar and backyard wind and are otherwise taking steps to reduce their energy demand. I recently built a new grid-tied, solar house in Big Horn—living proof that this new energy path is achievable.

The bottom line is clear: It's high time for Wyoming policy-makers and their counterparts in states across the country to stop pandering to fossil fuel industry lobbyists who are holding us back from moving beyond business as usual. We need to start focusing on the bigger issue of our clean energy future and how we get there.

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