The Role of Clean Energy in Cutting Climate Pollution

The world has to cut climate pollution, a major cause of global warming, 45% by 2030 and completely stop climate pollution by 2050, according to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), the United Nations’ body that assesses the science related to climate change. One critical way to drastically reduce climate pollution is to adopt clean energy across all sectors of life.

We already have enough clean energy sources to power our lives daily, so this switch is underway. We can produce energy from sources like wind, sun, and rivers. We know simple steps like better insulation and lighting save energy. Current investment in a clean energy future will also result in new and additional technologies going forward. Today, coal use in the US is already plummeting because of cleaner alternatives found all over the country (though its use remains on the rise elsewhere). Texas leads the U.S. in renewable energy from wind, generating more than double the number-two wind-power-producing state, Iowa. California and Texas are leading the way on solar power. These states provide the blueprint for building utility-scale renewable energy. What we lack is political will to build out the infrastructure to transmit all this energy.

That’s where you—and Moms Clean Air Force—come in, as advocates for clean energy demanding this necessary change. Huge energy transitions have successfully happened in the past: we went from whale oil to coal to oil. Though each transition generated resistance, each also transformed the way we live.

Clean energy and health

Nearly 36% of people in the U.S. live in counties where the air is unhealthy to breathe.

Renewable energy options lower climate pollution, make the air cleaner, improve public health, and lower health care bills.

Clean energy also doesn’t produce the harmful emissions that cause climate change and its associated harms, like extreme weather, wildfires, and food insecurity—all things that can negatively impact health, especially children’s health.

Transitioning to clean energy will lower rates of specific health issues, including asthma and heart conditions.

Taking a step back: what is—and is not—clean energy

Clean energy only comes from sources that don’t emit carbon or methane or other climate-warming pollution while energy is generated. It’s energy that’s renewable and safer for our communities and families. Fossil fuels are not clean energy. This includes natural gas because it emits carbon dioxide when burned for energy and methane, which has a powerful impact on climate disruption, leaks from its supply chain. The bottom line of clean energy technologies is that they do not create climate pollution while generating energy.

Currently, some households are able to rely solely on renewable energy, but most still use dirty sources of electricity that contribute to climate disruption. Similarly, some people drive electric vehicles that emit no tailpipe pollution, but most cars on the road still produce climate-harming exhaust. Well beyond individual cars and homes, energy and transportation systems and infrastructure across many industries must be overhauled, cleaned up, and modernized. This includes the trucks that transport daily food and goods and school buses too.

The mission of Moms Clean Air Force is to protect children from air pollution and climate change. We envision a safe, stable, and equitable future where all children breathe clean air. We fight for Justice in Every Breath, recognizing the importance of equitable solutions in addressing air pollution and climate change. www.momscleanairforce.org
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Clean energy and environmental justice

In the U.S., historically marginalized communities of color are more likely to live near sources of dirty energy, including natural gas production facilities and power plants. These communities are already disproportionately impacted by climate change and bear the brunt of floods and natural disasters, while also suffering the most negative health effects of air pollution.

Moving toward zero climate pollution across many sectors will reduce this burden while providing equity, justice, and new economic opportunities. More work is needed to continue to create a more just global supply chain of clean energy stalwarts like rechargeable batteries—from mining to toxic waste recycling.

Clean energy concerns

There are, of course, issues and compromises when it comes to clean energy. Nothing is impact-free, and clean technology’s supply chain isn’t pristine. Lithium mining for electric car batteries is problematic, for example. Concerns like mining impacts are being solved in real time. Battery technology is quickly developing to lessen the need for raw materials, and recycling is being expanded to decrease demand for critical minerals. Overall, renewable energy remains a safer, cleaner bet than fossil fuels.

The cost of shifting to clean energy

Significant investment is needed for large-scale transition, but it will pay back enormous dividends. There’s no choice; doing nothing is far more expensive than cutting climate pollution. The cost of inaction is already enormous and growing more expensive every day. Climate disasters are threatening the health and safety of families worldwide. U.S. losses from billion-dollar disasters from 2015 to 2022 alone are more than $1 trillion. The good news is that the costs of solar, wind, and energy storage have dropped dramatically—solar alone is down nearly 90% over the past 10-plus years.

Take action

Parents across the country interested in transitioning to clean energy can join Moms Clean Air Force to advocate for strong pollution protections and cleaner air for our children and our communities.

In the U.S., there have been serious federal efforts on climate legislation, including significant funding available for state and local governments as well as agricultural producers and more through the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) and Inflation Reduction Act (IRA). Getting familiar with what funding is available for clean energy upgrades in your community through the IRA can help direct local action to take.

Learn more and take action: www.momscleanairforce.org

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