

Pennsylvania DEP Listening Session, Harrisburg PA, Sept. 25, 2014
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I am speaking in support of ~~new~~ higher standards for greenhouse gas reductions in Pennsylvania under the EPA's proposed rule on existing power plants. I hope that in crafting the new standards for the Commonwealth, the DEP will set its sights as high as possible.

Under the new rule, states will be able to decide how best to meet an emissions reduction target by using a variety of strategies, including the use of more renewable energy; increased energy efficiency; incentives for industry; and other means.

Fortunately, the Commonwealth has already developed a base of wind ~~and solar~~ power on which to build, and this should be maximized.* Wind and solar energy are becoming more competitive in price with natural gas; by 2018, the U.S. Energy Information Administration (EIA) predicts that the levelized cost of onshore wind energy will be lower than the cost of advanced and conventional coal.

Although coal was, in the past, part of Pennsylvania's energy history, there is no need to continue to burn it now that we have clean energy alternatives, and especially now that the public and the medical, scientific, and public policy communities understand the devastating impact of the carbon dioxide and other toxic chemicals emitted when coal is burned.

Asthma, on the rise in Pennsylvania's cities, is directly linked with the concentration of toxic particulates emitted by coal-burning power plants. Others have testified on this issue.

I will only reiterate that reducing the amount of carbon that is burned will have what economists call a co-benefit: that is, a positive effect, beyond reducing carbon emissions. This co-benefit will be evident in better public health; fewer work days lost to illness; and substantial savings in the cost of treating some chronic respiratory and cardiac diseases in large numbers of children and adults.

The burning of coal is costly for Pennsylvania in another way. Increasing the emission of greenhouse gases, primarily carbon dioxide, warms air and water and enables the air to hold more water. This in turn produces heavier

and more frequent rain and snow storms of the kind Pennsylvania has experienced over the past 30 years. ** These phenomena stem from more moisture in the atmosphere, the result of increased evaporation and higher surface temperatures. Severe storms in any season are undeniably expensive and we should prevent them by reducing global and local warming.

I would also like to mention Pennsylvania's role in the health and future of Chesapeake Bay, which has been called "America's Estuary." Pennsylvania forms a major part of the Chesapeake Bay watershed. Anything that we can do to improve the quality of the water in our rivers and streams, including reducing toxic pollutants from coal-fired power plants, will improve the health of this vital, endangered natural environment. The Bay is the nursery for the fish and other marine life we depend on and one of the few remaining sources of food and rest along the Atlantic flyway for virtually all migrating flocks of songbirds and shorebirds. We can't lose this natural resource, or the flora and fauna of Pennsylvania itself. What we do today, this year, in drawing up strong carbon dioxide reduction standards, will have tremendous future benefits.

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* American Wind Energy Association, 2013.

** Report, "When It Rains, It Pours," PennEnvironment Research and Policy Center, Aug. 2, 2012.