

Why am I here?
September 25, 2014

Good afternoon. My name is Wendi Taylor and I am a mother and grandmother. I fully support the proposal to limit carbon pollution from existing power plants. The costs of failing to adequately deal with carbon pollution are immense. It is contributing to global warming, which is changing our climate and disrupting our lives. By the end of the century, the northeast as a region of the United States is expected to see an additional 57 days per year (nearly 2 more full months) of temperatures over 95 degrees. This will have severe consequences on our health, our economy, and the infrastructure and natural systems on which we all depend.

We have to discourage the mining and burning of coal. We know how to do this. Lawmakers have always used their authority to encourage certain things – like enacting seat belt laws and speed limits to encourage safe driving -- and discourage other things -- like smoking by taxing cigarettes so much that people cannot afford to smoke as much or at all. This is what we have to do with coal and other fossil fuels.

This proposal to restrict the pollution that existing coal fired power plants can release to the air is a modest proposal. It is a fair proposal. The owners of the power plants, which are making profits from burning coal, should have to control their emissions. They are creating them so it should be their job to control them. Otherwise, their emissions become our problem. And their pollution is already a problem for many people.

People living in coal mining communities:

- Have a 70 percent increased risk for developing kidney disease.
- Have a 64 percent increased risk for developing chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) such as emphysema.
- Are 30 percent more likely to report high blood pressure (hypertension).

Underground mine workers often suffer from 'black lung' (pneumoconiosis). Workers get black lung disease from breathing in coal dust– it results in shortness of breath, and puts individuals at risk for emphysema, bronchitis, and fibrosis. Surprisingly, after years of decline, black lung is on the rise

People living near or downwind from coal fired powered plants suffer increased rates of asthma, cardiovascular disease, and pre-mature and low birth-weight births. Emissions tests at coal plants have revealed 67 different air toxics. Fifty five of these toxics are

neurotoxins or developmental toxins. Twenty-four are known, probable, or possible carcinogens. The Clean Air Task Force's updated The Toll From Coal Report (2010) estimates that particulate pollution from existing coal plants would cause 13,200 deaths in 2010. The analysis found that the fleet of coal plants would also emit pollution resulting in more than 20,000 heart attacks, 9,700 hospitalizations, and more than 200,000 asthma attacks. As climate change gets worse, so will these health effects.

Higher average temperature leads to worse air quality, and in turn more hospital admissions and premature deaths, particularly among children. It leads to the spread of insect borne diseases that were once only problems in the tropics. It leads to more frequent intense storms, which can damage our homes and threaten our lives with high winds and flooding. It also threatens our economy.

Pennsylvania has three major river systems – Ohio, Susquehanna and Delaware – making it the nation's most flood prone state. A 10-year flood in Allegheny County costs over \$8 billion to clean up, and that is money that can't be invested in growing our regional economy. These will only become more severe. Agriculture currently employs more people in Pennsylvania than coal, oil and gas combined. Farming has always been subject to the whims of the weather. If our weather becomes more extreme as projected, many thousands of jobs will be lost because of the extreme heat, droughts and storms.

I am not sure why it has taken us so long to require companies to clean up the air before they release it. I have heard it is to keep energy prices affordable or to help create jobs. That may have been the byproduct of lax regulations but it was never the purpose. The purpose of lax regulation of coal emissions was to reduce the costs for the owners so they can make a certain level of profit.

But now we are living in a different time. We know that coal, oil and natural gas are finite resources. We know that as things get more scarce, the more expensive they become. . . We will never be able to keep energy prices low by using fossil fuel. In fact, we know that they will become more and more expensive. Now is the time to look at other ways to create energy. Investing in renewable energy will save all of us money.

Earlier this year, a study was conducted by PJM, the regional grid operator, on the impacts of integrating up to 30 percent renewable energy by 2026. It found that by using 30 percent solar and wind we would save up to \$16 billion per year on

electricity production, because it would replace the least efficient and most expensive power plants.

And as for jobs, wind and solar create more jobs than natural gas and coal per dollar invested, per Megawatts of capacity, and per Megawatt hours of generation. Nationally, there are already more jobs in the wind and solar industry than in coal mining and coal power generation, so the potential is enormous. By one estimate, Pennsylvania could create 500,000 40-year jobs by transitioning to 100 percent renewable energy by 2050, which would be over 10 times more jobs than the coal industry in the state currently supports.

For too long we have allowed corporations to get away with passing their costs of production on to the public. This externalization of costs has to stop. We can no longer live with this arrangement. The damage from coal mining is obvious. In western Pennsylvania where I was raised, we lived with mine subsidence, polluted streams, polluted air, slag piles and ruined land. Why? It certainly was not because the companies could not afford to do it right. We thought we had no choice.

However, nature has supplied all the energy we need. We just have to begin using it. Again and again, we have seen the power of sun, wind and water. We have seen its awesome power in droughts, hurricanes, tornadoes, and floods. We are powerless against these forces of nature. Yet, we have the technology to turn these awesome forces into forces for good. We just have to decide to do it! Wind and sunshine are all around us.

We need to curtail our use of coal, oil, and gas and begin investing in clean, renewable energy. And we can do it. According to a graduate thesis written by Nadine May of the Technical University in Brunswick, Germany, it would take an area of just 158 miles by 158 miles (c. 25,000 square miles) of solar panels to power the whole world.

And we have to do it now. Now before the planet gets any warmer. Now before we alter our climate so significantly that we create one disaster after another. This is already happening in places in the southern hemisphere. We in the United States have been spared the worst of it so far.

What we do here affects other people. Pennsylvania produces 1 percent of all the *greenhouse* ~~carbon~~ *gas* pollution in the world. We are like the young English Prince in the 1500's who was assigned a whipping boy to take the prince's punishment. It was thought that by his birth the prince had a divine right of kings. We in Pennsylvania have no divine right

to use any kind of energy we want, while others are our whipping boy and have to live with the consequences of our behavior. In fact, we have a responsibility as people of good will to step up and stop this cycle. Can we let island nations be flooded out of existence? Can we allow droughts to cause famine in Africa? Can we allow hurricanes and typhoons devastate countries where people have no means to recuperate? This is an environmental justice issue.

Even here in the United States, the people with the least bear the brunt of our disasters. Think of who suffered the most from Hurricanes Katrina and Sandy. Some of our fellow Americans lost everything and still have not recovered. And because of the incidences of hurricanes, tornadoes and flooding are increasing, the cost of insurance is skyrocketing, meaning people can afford to pay for insurance, making more and more people at risk from future disasters.

Climate change and global warming is threatening more and more people. This is an issue of fairness and justice.

This is not about saving our planet. Our planet will survive. It has survived many calamities and it will recover from anything we do to it and find a new normal. The real problem is that we may make the planet so inhospitable that the plants, animals and people may not survive. And those that do, may be living in a very different type of world.

There are those who say there is no global warming. These people are like the person who has smoked for 50 years and awakes every morning hacking and coughing. This same person can no longer climb steps or take a walk around the block. He insists that this is just a normal part of aging. Then, one day, he collapses and is taken to the emergency room. Upon awakening, he is told that he has 4th stage lung cancer. Had this person heeded the early warning signs, something could have been done. The moral of the story is: Just because we don't want to know, doesn't mean it is not happening.

History is filled with great civilizations that no longer exist. Humankind has not made a steady progression. Civilizations have flourished and then all but disappeared. How many of those past civilizations ignored the warning signs out of arrogance or ignorance or because they did not want to do what it would take to solve the problem? We may be gone if we don't do something NOW. We need to create the political will to ACT before it is too late.

We have to make it expensive for companies to continue investing in fossil fuels. A small step in that direction is to require power plants stop polluting our air. This will not

put companies out of business. If they can no longer make money in the fossil fuel industry, they may move toward renewable energy.

Despite their advertising, oil companies, coal companies and natural gas companies know that their products are dwindling. They know that the more they extract, the less there is. Many corporations are already getting ready for that time when they run out of oil, natural gas and coal. In the meantime, they want to continue to operate for as long as we will let them.

Some people like to think that a corporation's reason for being is to create jobs. It is not. If corporations could make money without hiring people, they would do it. Corporations were not created to be good corporate citizens. They have no allegiance to an area, a state or a country. Corporations are not people, they are a legal structure, created to efficiently and effectively make money. The legal structure limits their liability, allows for changes in ownership and ensures a corporation's existence in perpetuity. These are not the characteristics of people. If a corporation cannot make money doing one thing, they will find another way to make money.

If we act to limit our carbon pollution, the coal mining sector will certainly be impacted. Those working in power plants fueled by coal will be affected. But if we don't act, all other sectors will be impacted. That does not mean that we can neglect mineworkers and energy workers, their families, and their communities. We need to commit to helping them transition just as we have helped tobacco farmers and logging communities transition in the past.

There are certain things these communities have in common. Where there was mining, there is a lot of work to do to restore the land and streams. That means jobs. Where coal fired power plants exist, there is an entire infrastructure already there to transmit power. Could these be converted as future sites for solar panels or wind farms? And where there are coal plants, there is coal ash waste to be cleaned up. More jobs. With training programs, we can employ people right where they live so they can maintain their communities and keep their family ties.

The bottom line is that we will get off fossil fuel – either when it runs out and we have to scramble to survive or by making this transition now with a well-reasoned plan that will require a minimum of disruption. I choose the latter and the EPA

and the PA Department of Environmental Protection should lead the way. To do less, is to let us all down.

I began by telling you that I am a mother and grandmother. I would do anything to protect my family. I don't want my grandchildren and their children to have to live through the effects of climate change – and the horror it will create. That is why I am here.

Sincerely,

Wendi Taylor