

PA Department of Environmental Protection
Listening Session on PA Response to EPA's Clean Power Plan
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My name is Sue Edwards, and I am a retired educator and environmental activist from Delaware County. I volunteer with the Sierra Club and also other environmental organizations. I am led to do what I can to shoulder responsibility for curbing damage to our civilization from the ravages of unrestrained dumping of greenhouse gases into our atmosphere. I regret that I have only taken up this effort in the past four years, though it has been brought to our society's attention for several decades now. My husband and I have two sons who are young adults, and I am very concerned about what kind of world they will have to live in. I see the issue of climate change as the test of our generation.

I was heartened when President Obama and the EPA announced there would be restrictions on continuing to spew carbon dioxide into the air. Of course, not so long ago, carbon was not regarded to be a pollutant. And it's not, in the strict sense of the word. However, scientists are now clear that it endangers our society nevertheless. A huge experiment is being conducted, and we are the subjects, willing or not, along with all of the animal and plant species on earth, to see how much carbon dioxide and other gases can be added to our atmosphere before the resulting global temperature rises to a level that, while not killing all human life, will seriously up-end civilization. How much can we humans tolerate of plagues of Biblical proportions--including droughts, floods, weather disruptions, super-storms, food resources diminished, water shortages, wildfires, tropical diseases and insects in temperate zones, and more.

According to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's National Climatic Data Center, August 2014 was the warmest August on record for the globe as a whole since record-keeping began in 1880. Additionally, August 2014 marked the 38th consecutive August with a temperature above the 20th century average. We humans are on track to experience temperatures not seen in hundreds of thousands of years if we don't take action to reverse course. It doesn't take thermometers to know what we can learn from ice cores, tree rings, and isotopes of oxygen---that we're on a course to hit high temperatures not seen since before the dawn of civilization. The societies we have built are not designed to deal with temperatures much more than 2 degrees Centigrade higher than average. And unfortunately, the people who have done the least to cause this situation such as citizens of the Philippines and Bangladesh will bear the earliest and most severe consequences of this experiment. The most economically disadvantaged in

the US will also have the fewest resources to protect themselves and recover from climate-related damages. The chaos resulting from a changing climate threaten the security of everyone, which is why the Pentagon takes the threats posed by climate change quite seriously

Burning fossil fuels has allowed humanity, especially in the developed world, to advance and save much back-breaking labor. However, even though there are still reserves of coal, oil, and gas, we cannot continue to use them for our power sources. It's time to leave them in the ground and plan a just transition to a renewable energy economy as rapidly as possible. The companies who own those remaining reserves cannot continue to profit from them and to receive subsidies from taxpayers. Their assets will be considered "stranded," which means these companies can no longer be considered a sound investment.

Fortunately, there are other options. We simply need to decide as a society that we will invest as we have done when faced with crises or opportunities in the past. Highest priority must be placed on improving our energy efficiency, followed by renewable sources for electricity generation, in particular wind and solar power, and a distributed smart grid. These do not pollute, do not create dangerous spills, and do not cause illnesses such as asthma and heart disease. These forms of renewable energy DO create far more jobs than comparable investments in fossil fuel electricity generation, and they DO lead to cheaper electricity rates, since they tend to displace the most costly forms of generation. We do not have to pioneer these solutions. Other countries and some states within the US do far better than the overall US average in using energy efficiently and harnessing renewable, non-polluting energy sources.

With your help, Pennsylvania can decide to be a leader in intelligent planning for a transition to renewable energy. We can decide to assist families and communities where jobs in the fossil fuel industry are lost. We can decide to increase our Alternative Energy Portfolio Standard goals—particularly since we now are not even keeping pace with the states around us and thus are losing out to them in the development of solar and wind power as well as energy efficiency.

I ask that our state leaders commit to meeting and *surpassing* the goals set forth for Pennsylvania in the EPA's Clean Power Plan and that we do this without the use of nuclear power, which presents a grave danger in the event of accidents and which still has not found a way to dispose of its wastes after decades of trying. As I understand it, the targets for Pennsylvania in the Clean Power Plan are ones we can accomplish with one hand tied behind our back. I believe we can do better, and I hope you will be up for the challenge!