

CLIMATE JUSTICE & ENERGY DEMOCRACY: A PLATFORM VISION

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Background

This Energy Democracy Platform Vision was commissioned by the Climate Justice Alliance (CJA) as a guide and unifying platform of principles for the social movement transition from an extractive energy economy to a sustainable regenerative economy – one that is rooted in social, economic and environmental justice. The Energy Democracy Platform Vision outlines the overarching principles for Energy Democracy that are at the foundation of Climate Justice. The intention is to shift the narrative of climate change solution building from a carbon-centric, carbon reductionist orientation towards one that is people and community-based, and rooted in principles of justice. This Platform is intended to support and incorporate social, economic and environmental justice movement work into the field of climate justice. The Platform offers a collective set of common principles that should guide new solutions and anchor our collective efforts in planning, advocacy, organizing, and legislative action.

As the vision was being developed, there was an acknowledgement that the dominant energy democracy discourse needed to be expanded from a purely decentralized technological and financing discussion to one that incorporated historic racial, cultural, and

economic justice intersections with the energy sector. While this justice-based framework of Energy Democracy was absent from mainstream debate, it was (and is) already a core aspect of the energy work being of many of the member organizations of CJA. Thus, CJA asked the Center for Earth, Energy and Democracy (CEED), with its grounding in energy policy and environmental justice, to assist with development of a more holistic platform vision of Energy Democracy that encompassed the broader work of its alliance members.

In order to develop this document involved CEED reviewed and compiled CJA member documents, incorporating that work into a Platform Vision. In addition to CEED's energy policy contributions to the vision, CJA member contributions to the platform included: Cooperation Jackson, Communities for a Better Environment, East Michigan Environmental Action Council, Black Mesa Water Coalition, Asian Pacific Environmental Network, Movement Generation, Indigenous Environmental Network, and Kentuckians for the Commonwealth. The Platform was workshopped with CJA membership prior to this publication. The resulting Platform Vision fundamentally centers the lived experiences of frontline communities into a vision of Energy Democracy.

The Imperative for an Energy Democracy

Today, we are facing one of the gravest environmental problems in history. The effects of 200 years of the fossil-fuel economy threatens our Earth's climate and ecosystem, and as a result, will also inflict even more harms on communities around the world. Many of these communities are, and have been for some time, suffering significant costs associated with the extractive energy economy. Historically, these **frontline communities** were the first to experience the effects of the exploitation of land, labor and nature that were part of the first phase of fossil-fuel development.

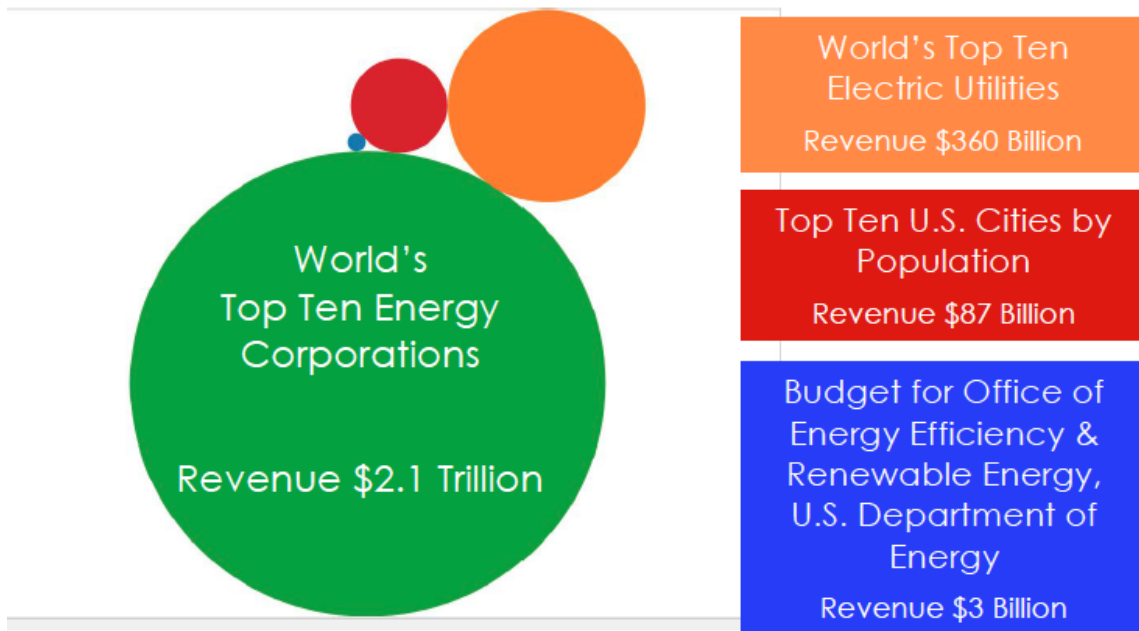
- The appropriation of land and removal of the First Peoples which resulted in access and control over vast areas of this continent.


- The dehumanizing and exploitation of African and Indigenous peoples through enslavement.
- De-valuing human labor, and using people for profit-building industries, including using trade agreements, foreign policy, and immigration policy to ensure a pool of cheap labor.
- Reducing the value of nature (water, air, trees, minerals, etc.) to commodities or resource inputs into capitalist production.

An important contributor to this history of inequality is the fossil-fuel energy system, which has been built upon the goal of producing wealth-creating, profit-maximizing energy.

Energy Investments Out of Balance

Revenue and Budgets (2014)





The wealth created by this corporate-based energy system, supported and maintained by government policies and private-sector financial systems is staggering. The world's top ten energy corporations alone (which are based in the U.S., Russia, China, U.K. and France) generated more than *\$2.1 Trillion* in revenue in 2014, with an annual profit of more than *\$178 Billion*. The top electric utilities in the world have a market value of over *\$360 Billion* (U.S. based Duke Energy leads utilities with a market value of *\$49.3 billion*).¹ The current electricity system alone represents 10% of all investments in the U.S.²

This extractive energy system has also resulted in significant social and environmental costs. Mining the Earth's resources for the purpose of producing more and more, at the cost of local community well-being cannot continue. Extraction of coal, oil and gas, uranium and rivers for hydropower, have also resulted in violation of human rights, social displacement, and environmental harm. And, the extractive energy system is responsible for the most daunting environmental problem in history – climate change.

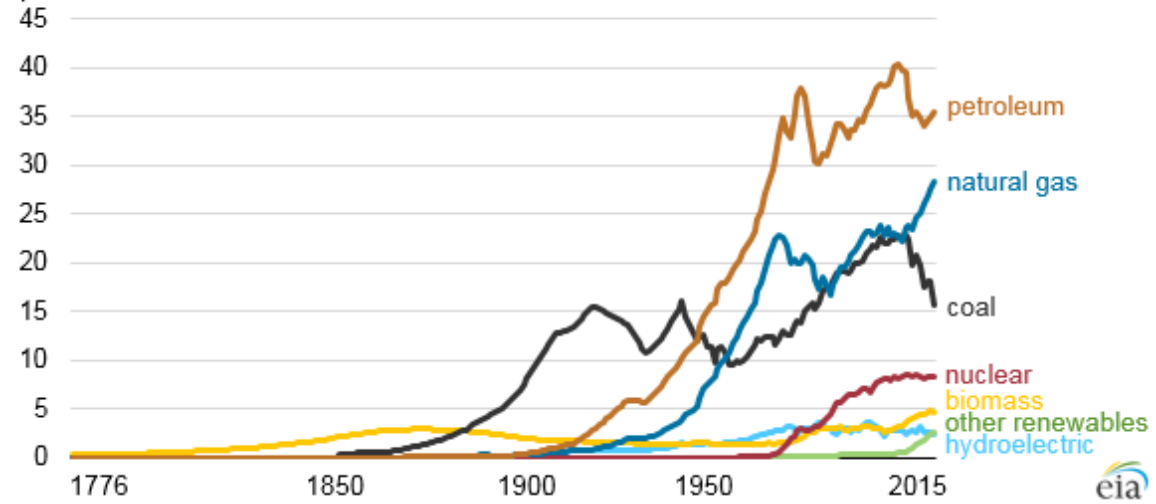
Clearly, climate change serves as our 21st Century oracle, offering us counsel on the errors of our historical actions, as well as how we must act for change. The U.S. emits one-fifth of greenhouse gases emissions, and almost *a trillion metric tons* since 1800. We are also responsible for one-fourth of all emissions since 1960.

¹ www.energydigital.com/utilities/2679/Top-10-utilities-companies-in-the-world

² Goldthau and Sovacool. The Uniqueness of the Energy Security, Justice and Governance Problem. *Energy Policy* 41 (2012): 232-240.

Energy consumption in the United States (1776-2015)

quadrillion Btu



Source: U.S. Energy Information Administration, *Monthly Energy Review*³

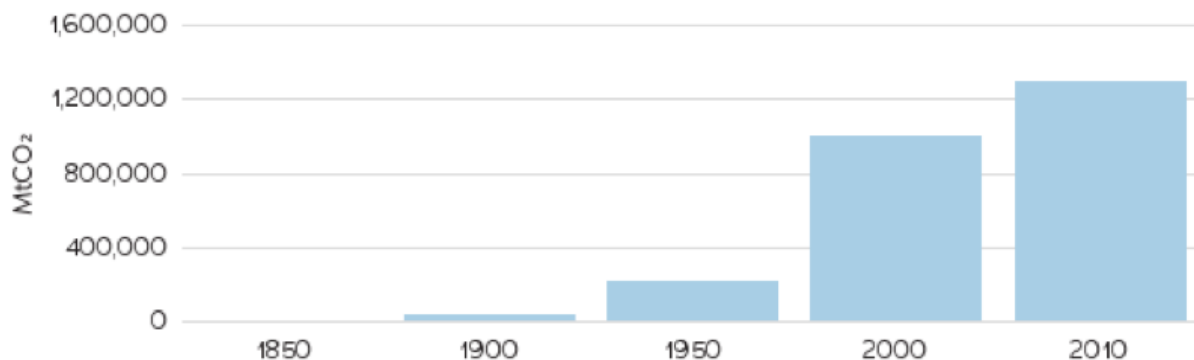


³ U.S. Energy Information Administration, *Monthly Energy Review*. Energy. Consumption in the United States (1776-2015). [Online Image]. Retrieved at: <https://www.eia.gov/todayinenergy/detail.php?id=26912>

Cumulative Global CO2 Emissions (1850-2010)

*excluding land use change and forestry

Source: WRI CAIT Climate Data Explorer



Neither the costs nor the benefits of the climate-changing extractive economy have been shared equally. A few of the statistics shared by Climate Justice Alliance members:

- The risk of lung cancer for Native uranium miners was 29 times more than for those who had not worked in the mines; while the number of abandoned mines is not fully known, there are currently 521 on record on Navajo Reservation alone.
- As one of the most segregated cities in the country, the City of Detroit is also home to the most polluted zip code 48217 in Michigan, which is also the third most polluted in the country having as its neighbors Marathon Oil Refinery and the Detroit Edison Coal Plant.
- In Kemper County Mississippi, the extractive coal industry is building,

with government support, a carbon capture and sequestration experimental pilot plant estimated to cost \$5.2 billion.

- The rate of children born with birth defects has been 42% higher in areas near mountaintop removal mining and the public health costs of pollution from coal operations in Appalachia amount to \$75 billion a year.
- In Richmond, California a Chevron refinery has compiled a long record of safety and pollution violations, and resulted in an explosion that sent 15,000 residents and 19 workers to the hospital.

An Energy Democracy that effectively and substantially produces solutions to the problems of environmental and social inequality must be a top priority.

Foundations of an Energy Democracy

We have a moral and political obligation to act for change. This Energy Democracy platform is a vision for our nation's role and responsibility for an energy system that addresses climate change in a way that also tackles domestic and global inequality. Energy Democracy, in the truest sense, moves us beyond the current government and corporate managed pollution emitting energy system to one that is democratically managed and operates at community-scales. It is a shift from the corporate, centralized fossil fuel economy to one that is governed by communities; designed on the principle of no harm to the environment; supports local economies; and contributes to the health and well-being of all peoples.

The path to Energy Democracy will require transformation of the politics and economics that created the fossil fuel energy system we have today. This path to Energy Democracy is a long-term project. Yet, because of the urgency of climate change and other environmental threats, as well as the harms being imposed on peoples in the U.S. and globally as a result of the fossil fuel energy regime, there is a critical need to act now.

Ten Principles for Energy Democracy

This framework for Energy Democracy promotes an agenda that incorporates both immediate and longer-term strategies that serve as a guide toward achieving the vision of a true Energy Democracy. These strategies must be designed around several fundamental principles of democracy:

1. *Human Rights:* The United Nations has declared that the right to a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable *environment* is integral to the full enjoyment of a wide range of *human rights*, including the rights to life,

health, food, water.⁴ In alignment with human rights principles, Energy Democracy must be built on the practice and understanding of the main dimensions of the interrelationship between human rights and environmental protection, namely as outlined by the United Nations:

- The environment is a requirement for the enjoyment of human rights. Therefore, full and equal environmental protection is necessary to allow the full exercise of protected rights;
- Certain human rights, especially access to information, participation in decision-making, and access to justice in environmental matters, is essential to good environmental decision-making;
- The right to a safe, healthy and ecologically-balanced environment is a human right in itself.

2. *Self-determination:* Self-determination is the rights of peoples to determine their own destiny, including their own form of economic, cultural and social development. Energy is a vital and basic need in our daily lives. How we produce and consume energy impacts communities and nature and their rights to a clean, healthy and viable life. Therefore, a principle of Energy Democracy is that all peoples and communities have the right and ability to participate in, and make decisions about their energy system. The shift to Energy Democracy requires building new forms of decision-making and governance over energy choices in a way that supports self-determination, most especially for those communities and environments that are most vulnerable to energy system impacts.

⁴ The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), High-level Expert Meeting: The New Future of Human Rights and Environment, December 2009. Accessed at: www.unep.org/environmentalgovernance/Events/HumanRightsandEnvironment/tabid/2046

3. Energy is a Commons: Energy is essentially the transformation of nature for our use. Whether it is fossil fuels such as coal and oil, or renewable sources such as the sun's energy – we are using nature for our needs. A fundamental principle of Energy Democracy is that these gifts of nature are for everyone, and as such are everyone's responsibility to care for, nurture and sustain. The resources used for energy are part of the Earth's commons, and should not be owned by, or belong to, any set of peoples, countries or corporations exclusively. The energy commons is a recognition and respect for the cultural, spiritual, and social elements of the Earth, and is an acknowledgement that its natural process should not be exploited and exhausted.

4. Just Transition: Energy Democracy must promote open access to decent jobs and work – that is, jobs that provide safe and healthy livelihoods for families and communities; fair and equitable treatment of workers; financial security and adequate financial protections; health benefits; the right to be treated with dignity and respect; and the ability to voice concerns and participate in decision-making about working conditions, free from harassment. The Just Transition is about creating new meaningful, living wage jobs that prioritize unemployed and underemployed community members, community members left out of the fossil-fuel economy, and workers in the fossil-fuel industry that will be transitioned out of the extractive economy. Energy Democracy supports the opportunities for thinking about and creating new organizational forms such as worker cooperatives, worker-owned businesses and other innovative worker supported models.

5. Energy Use. Energy is a means to meet our society's needs for various daily activities. We need energy to cook; heat, light and cool our homes and businesses; power our industry; and fuel our transportation system. The transition to an Energy

Democracy is also a shift in our understanding and relationship to energy toward one in which we build our communities in a way that minimizes our need for using nature's resources. This means building our housing, transportation and other infrastructures so that we can fulfill our daily life needs without a large system of producing energy for profit. This requires a shift in our understanding about how energy should be used. It is also a fundamental principle of Energy Democracy that all peoples have access to decent livelihoods

6. Community Governance: A key step toward Energy Democracy is regaining community and public control over the energy system. This is a longer-term project, which will require overhauling the corporatist energy regime that is in place today. As we move toward Energy Democracy, we will need to develop and implement strategies that will strategically and deliberately move us toward our vision of community governance. This will require us to develop new forms of governance, including laws, policies and programs that enable, empower and support democratic decision-making in its truest form. This includes an obligation and responsibility to ensure that communities can define the architecture of their energy system, and any and all strategies for community forms of ownership of energy services and local assets.

7. Diversity and Scale. The shift to Energy Democracy will require that the design and technologies of the energy system will be determined by the goals and needs of the community. Decision making over the type and quality of energy services; how energy is produced and delivered; ensuring access to energy services for all; and other key issues should be based on the community. This means that a diversity of energy mechanisms that can meet the diversity of community needs will be essential. A democratic energy system that matches the scale of energy production to the needs of community use is more efficient, flexible, and

democratic. This type of energy system also reduces waste, inefficiencies and the need for very high capital investment and maintenance required by the large-scale, centralized energy system now in place.

8. Reclaiming Relationship: A core problem of the extractive energy economy is that our relationship to energy, as people and communities, is that of a consumer. Energy Democracy is a shift away from this consumerist relationship to one where people and communities define and shape their relationship to how the Earth is used for our energy. Reclaiming our relationship to nature as more than managers of energy projects -- it is to empower community members to define how we wish to be in relationship to nature.

9. Acknowledge, Act and Repair Historical Harms: The development of the fuel-fuel energy system has left a legacy of social, economic and environmental harms across many communities. The history of the extractive economy cannot be divorced from the history of race, class and the colonization of Indigenous peoples in this country. Energy Democracy requires that these historical legacies, which continue to have impacts on Indigenous, communities of color, and other exploited peoples be recognized and that the costs for repairing these harms be acknowledged and integrated into the development of our energy future.

10. Rights of Nature: As outlined by the Laws of Mother Earth developed in Bolivia⁵: Mother Earth is a dynamic living system comprising an indivisible community of all living systems and living organisms, interrelated, interdependent and complementary, which share a common destiny. Mother Earth has the right to the integrity of all living systems, including the conditions for regeneration. This includes the rights to:

- *life*: the integrity of living systems and natural processes that sustain them, and capacities and conditions for regeneration; as well as the preservation of differentiation and variety of beings without being genetically altered or structurally modified in an artificial way, so that their existence, functioning or future potential is threatened;
- *water*: preservation of the functionality of the water cycle, its existence in the quantity and quality needed to sustain living systems, and its protection from pollution for the reproduction of the life of Mother Earth and all its components;
- *air*: preservation of the quality and composition of air for sustaining living systems and its protection from pollution, for the reproduction of all life;
- *equilibrium*: maintenance or restoration of the interrelationship, interdependence, complementarity and functionality of the components of Mother Earth in a balanced way for the continuation of their cycles and reproduction of their vital processes;
- *restoration*: timely and effective restoration of living systems affected by human activities directly or indirectly;
- *pollution-free living*: preservation of any of Mother Earth's components from contamination, as well as toxic and radioactive waste generated by human activities.

⁵ Drawn directly from the Laws of Mother Earth, Bolivia. Full text: <http://www.worldfuturefund.org/Projects/Indicators/motherearthbolivia.html>

Legacy Energy Exploitation: Indigenous and Peoples of Color

Indigenous, communities of color, and low-income communities have historically borne the brunt of industrial pollution, power plant pollution, transportation pollution, and other forms of toxic contamination. These communities are also marked by high unemployment and poverty, and also suffer disproportionate levels of cancer, asthma, and other diseases. Energy Democracy requires new energy solutions that will make these issues a priority.

Indigenous Peoples⁶

Indigenous peoples in the United States and globally have a unique cultural and political standing. In the U.S., treaty rights form the basis of sovereign tribal governments to protect and preserve Indigenous lands and cultural practice. For Indigenous peoples, Mother Earth is sacred and must be honored, protected, loved and respected. Indigenous peoples understand that the Earth, its land and resources, are natural, spiritual assets, and this is the basis of a profound and sacred relationship with Mother Earth. In combination, the cultural and political status of tribal governments is essential to the protection of biodiversity, and community well-being. This particular relationship has enabled Indigenous peoples to act in a manner that has resulted in the conservation and preservation of biodiversity for thousands of years -- over 80% of the world's remaining biodiversity is found within Indigenous peoples' lands and territories. Indigenous peoples represent approximately 350 million individuals in the world and make up approximately 90% of the world's cultural diversity.

⁶ Indigenous Environmental Network; Black Mesa Water Coalition

Indigenous peoples, as the first peoples on the continent have created successful and durable sustainability practices for generations prior to the birth of the extractive energy economy. These included intricate social and governance customs, spiritual and ceremonial practices, highly developed cooperative methods for the exchange of goods and services, and livelihood practices that co-evolved with the natural ecosystem -- all of which were based on a moral reciprocity with Mother Earth. These customary practices are highly adaptive and continue to be used by Indigenous peoples in the U.S and around the world.

A cornerstone of Energy Democracy is promoting and preserving Indigenous cultural and customary practices; Indigenous economic autonomy; and sustainable energy services. In addition to all the elements outlined in this Energy Democracy platform, this also requires that energy projects must be based on technologically sound and sustainable energy resources that do not threaten the Indigenous way of life, *and* that honor the cultural, traditional and treaty rights of Indigenous peoples. Indigenous spiritual and cultural practices depend upon access to traditional lands, including historically and spiritually significant places. Extractive economy practices such as mining, flooding of lands from mega-hydro dams, radioactive contamination from nuclear waste, fossil-fuel transmission and distribution damages the Indigenous spiritual and cultural relationship to Mother Earth, and disrupts important cultural customary practices. This is a violation of human rights and the right to self-determination.

Cultural livelihood practices are based on natural and spiritual laws, and traditional knowledge systems which support long-term social and environmental sustainability. It is especially important that traditional Indigenous knowledge not be sacrificed by over-reliance on western scientific methods

and standards. Each knowledge system has a role and place, and can work cooperatively toward an Energy Democracy for Indigenous peoples.

Energy Democracy also means that tribal governments must carefully evaluate the environmental and cultural consequences of the extractive energy economy, and begin developing their own path to Energy Democracy. Tribes can lead the way in requiring national and state governments, industry and multi-lateral institutions to adopt and abide by a precautionary principle in all energy decisions and policies, recognizing that each decision will have impacts on the future generations of all peoples. Finally, Energy Democracy cannot include strategies or activities that undermine or negatively affect Indigenous peoples around the world.

African American Peoples⁷

Energy Democracy is one of many democratic movements that must work and align together to create true Democracy. The historical oppressions of African Americans and the enormous wealth that was created through their enslavement must be acknowledged and incorporated into our agenda for an Energy Democracy. Prior to the rise of the fossil fuel energy economy, Black human labor was exploited and used as human energy for work; and was also exploited as the extractive economy grew. Slave labor was used by the earliest coal, iron and steel industries. Later, corporate industry promoted racism in America in their battle against unionization, and in alliance with the criminal justice system arrested Blacks, issued excessive sentences or fines which could not be paid, only to be sold or leased to mining companies for their labor.

Energy Democracy requires acknowledgement of this history and the contribution of Black peoples to the creation of wealth in this country. Moving to a Just Transition requires that the new economy repair the legacy of racism and oppression and that we fight against the continued racism that exists today. There is an intersectionality of the root causes of the extractive economy and the root causes of the destruction of Black families and communities; continued segregation in housing, education, and employment; the criminalization of Black lives; and environmental racism that results in the over-polluting of Black communities. This means an Energy Democracy must acknowledge, understand and act to eradicate racism and its links to the extractive economy.

It is clear that Energy Democracy can be realized only if there is full, meaningful and active participation of Indigenous and people of color. Therefore, frontline communities and peoples must have decisive roles in energy decision-making at all levels and in all sectors producing and using energy, both public and private. Energy Democracy requires governments to impose a legally binding obligation to restore all areas already affected by coal, oil, gas, large hydro, and uranium exploration and exploitation. This restoration must be implemented so that frontline communities (Indigenous communities of color, and low income communities) can continue to maintain their traditional uses of lands.

⁷ Cooperation Jackson; East Michigan Environmental Action Council.

Energy Democracy Grounded in a Just Transition

The transition to Energy Democracy will require changes in how we organize our economy as well as our energy system. The transformation toward a Just Transition is based on bringing the necessary community organizing resources, programmatic alternatives, technical know-how, and development financing to the solution-building table where Energy Democracy, as well as food justice, economic democracy, and community empowerment are addressed. Achieving Energy Democracy and a Just Transition will require creative ideas, commitment to local self-determination, strong leadership, long-term social and economic investment, and reclaiming justice as a cornerstone political principle.

Energy Democracy is one of the cornerstones of the Just Transition. Its role in the Just Transition is to support and re-build the energy infrastructure that is based on clean and renewable energy for our transportation, housing, and business sectors. Energy Democracy also ensures that any and all energy-related investments and jobs are geared toward developing a worker, family- and community-centered economy which includes the need for energy-related jobs that pay a living wage, provide health benefits and access to quality, and affordable childcare. In addition, energy jobs must have the unrestricted right to collectively organize and must contribute to the creation of place-based local economic development. This means that energy investments and opportunities should be targeted first to frontline communities and their members where they live and work. Clean and renewable energy jobs are those that reduce the consumption of energy and raw materials; reduce greenhouse gases, with the goal of completely decarbonizing the economy; reduce waste and pollution toward the complete elimination of all forms of waste generation and pollution emissions; protect and restore ecosystems, biodiversity and place community

health and well-being at the center.⁸

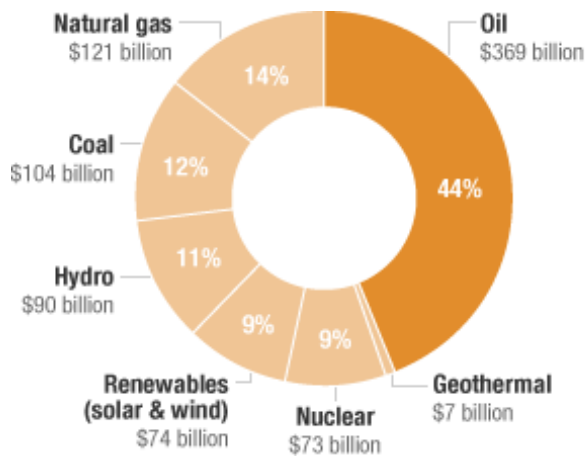
The Just Transition is about creating new meaningful, living wage jobs and prioritizes employing unemployed and underemployed community members, and those workers in the fossil fuel industry that will need to transition to a renewable energy economic infrastructure. New energy service provision mechanisms such as worker cooperatives and support of worker-owned business models should be explored and supported for their opportunities to address Energy Democracy and a Just Transition.

We know that the resource allocation toward the transition of our economy is still skewed. According to a recent study, the federal government has provided an estimated \$837 billion for energy development since 1950, inclusive of money for tax concessions, research and development, and the value of regulations (such as exemptions from price controls). Of that, nearly 80% of historic federal incentives between 1950 and 2010 have gone to fossil fuels (oil, natural gas, coal) and nuclear energy.⁹

⁸ Drawn from Just Transition Alliance and International Labor Organization concepts and definitions: www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/lang--en/index.htm

⁹ "60 Years Of Energy Incentives," Management Information Services for the Nuclear Energy Institute. Image Credit: Alyson Hurt/NPR.

Federal Energy Incentives (1950-2010)¹⁰



Moving toward a Just Transition will require that our governments and our social and economic institutions re-define a good economy to one that places meeting human needs as a priority and values the work, labor and creativity of all peoples. Energy Democracy must contribute to the creation of an economy, which includes an array of economic practices and initiatives that share common values – cooperation and sharing, social responsibility, sustainability, equity and justice.¹¹

This includes building a solidarity economy that supports Energy Democracy through making sure that sustainability investments do not result in gentrification and displacement. Energy Democracy also means that the creation of the new energy system will not result in the increased wealth of the few, but rather supports the enrichment of the entire community. New energy solutions must also have as their goal the stabilization of neighborhoods and communities, and the building of local jobs and services.

Directions toward this can include:

- Financing and reinvestment that supports small-scale, locally controlled energy systems that promote community self-reliance and self-sufficiency. Energy choices should promote innovation, self-reliance and broadly held local wealth.
- Investment of public resources including taxes, bonds, public grants, or pension funds that are utilized and directed towards Energy Democracy and away from supporting continued extractive developments that result in wealth inequality.¹²
- Ensuring that energy efficiency programs create long-term accessible jobs for communities that have suffered from chronic under-employment and unemployment.
- Prioritize people and communities affected by economic disruption, environmental damage, and social inequality. Generate stable, healthy, meaningful, living wage jobs that fulfill individual and community aspirations.
- Energy projects, from extraction to distribution, must ensure the rights of Indigenous and all community members to a sustainable, healthy clean energy services at the family and community level. All energy projects must prioritize the protection and restoration of public health, especially those who have experienced overburdened pollution in their communities and their work. Respect for cultural uniqueness, geography, history, and cultural practice should form the foundation of new energy projects.

¹⁰ "60 Years Of Energy Incentives," Management Information Services for the Nuclear Energy Institute. Image Credit: Alyson Hurt/NPR.

¹¹ Cooperation Jackson. Mission and Purpose of the Solidarity Economy. Accessed at: www.cooperationjackson.org/mission-and-purpose

¹² Kentuckians for the Commonwealth.

Developing Energy Democracy Policy Platforms

Energy Democracy requires the elimination of unsustainable dirty energy toward a new energy economy. Against the backdrop of climate change, many solutions are being offered to reduce carbon emissions, that have the long-term goal of decarbonizing the economy. We reaffirm the need to decarbonize, but this national strategy must not be pursued in sacrifice to social justice. Solutions that do not abide by the principles and actions outlined in this Energy Democracy platform are **false solutions**. False solutions are carbon-centric, without attention or inclusion of political, economic, and social justice. As false solutions they are insufficient and inadequate for addressing the full scope and root causes of climate change.

Energy Democracy prioritizes investment in an energy system that conserves the gifts and assets of nature (conservation), and reduces the need for finite resources (efficiency). Current strategies which align and support the path to Energy Democracy include public transportation and community planning; community and worker-led initiatives of energy services; food localization; zero-waste and zero-emission energy, renewable and community-controlled energy, to name a few.

Defining Clean and Renewable Energy¹³

As new energy technologies develop, criteria for defining clean or renewable energy is becoming more and more necessary. Energy Democracy will require us to continue to develop, define and elaborate on clear and appropriate definitions. How we define clean and renewable energy has implications for what types of energy technology are promoted including access to financial energy incentives, credits and other investments. Energy

¹³ Center for Earth, Energy and Democracy.

Democracy means that such supports should be directed for the purpose of truly clean, renewable and sustainable energy.

A definition of **clean energy** is that it will not result in new net pollution or toxic materials, including any co-pollutants emitted through extraction, production and distribution.

A definition of **renewable energy** is energy that comes from sources that are naturally regenerated over a short time period of time (as opposed to the 300 million years required for fossil fuels); is derived directly or indirectly from the sun, or natural movements and mechanisms of the environment; and is appropriate in scale to work symbiotically with ecological surroundings.

We understand that in the current system, our society cannot reach the goals of a pure clean and renewable energy economy immediately. Our present system consists of an electricity complex comprised of almost 20,000 power plants, half a million miles of high-voltage transmission lines, 1300 coal mines 410 underground natural gas storage fields, and 125 nuclear waste storage facilities. Additionally, there are hundreds of millions of transformers, distribution points, electric motors, and electric appliances. The transportation system consists of more than 1000 refineries, almost one million gas stations, almost 9 million miles of paved roads, which must be kept up, almost 60 million automobiles and trucks, and in total the transportation system consumes over 13 million barrels of oil each day.¹⁴

The current energy system is highly inefficient and wasteful. For example, the current electrical system is only about 33% efficient – which means two-thirds of the resources inputs are

¹⁴ Bureau of Transportation Statistics. 2012. Accessed at http://www.rita.dot.gov/bts/sites/rita.dot.gov.bts/files/publications/national_transportation_statistics/html/table_01_11.html; http://www.rita.dot.gov/bts/sites/rita.dot.gov.bts/files/publications/national_transportation_statistics/html/table_04_01.html

wasted. Energy Democracy calls for a transformation of this wasteful system toward one based on appropriate definitions of clean and renewable energy. These must serve as a guidepost for prompt and urgent energy planning and development.

Dynamic Policy Grounded in Principles

Energy Democracy requires us to move from principles to development; development to action; action to reflection and evaluation; reformulation and action again. We understand that the transition to Energy Democracy is transformational and will deeply change how our society is structured. We also understand there will be significant challenges and repressive responses by institutions that have benefitted from the wealth created by the extractive energy economy. Even so, true democracy demands we continue to act regardless of these challenges.

Energy Democracy actions will take many forms including direct actions; alternative institution building, and policy action. Policy work is first and foremost, about reclaiming governments for the people. Energy Democracy supports a diversity of new ideas and strategies, and encourages the development of policy platforms that can more deeply educate and inform communities about the range of policy possibilities. These include regulatory policies, new financial mechanisms, as well as the implementation of codes and standards. These innovations are occurring at all levels of government: federal, tribal, state and local.

Local ideas and innovations must inform a national vision of Just Transition based Energy Democracy. Across the nation, local communities and tribal nations and Indigenous groups have developed policy ideas and programs that are forming the foundation for a forward-looking national conversation on Energy Democracy. The shared or solidarity economy, community choice energy, shared renewables, cooperatives, and many others can serve as first phase contributions to

democratizing our energy system. As these move forward, we must also continue to innovate and incubate new ideas, as well as evaluate those in place to assess their progress in achieving the principles and goals of Energy Democracy. This platform vision serves as the foundation from which to anchor such possibilities and it speaks to the need for locally based solutions that require national level investment.

If we are committed to the ideals of justice and equality; and if we are committed to a society that does not harm the Earth and [her] gifts, it is imperative that we act promptly to transition to an Energy Democracy. In the short-term, this will require investing in a diversity of new ideas and innovations, drawing from the creativity and the commitment to the ideals of justice of the Energy Democracy movement.

In the long-term, it will require innovative development of research and methods for determining and evaluating our progress toward Energy Democracy. And it will require new models for energy policy and planning that support and build local economies, decent and well-paying jobs, education systems where children can thrive, sustainable housing and transportation infrastructures that meet the needs of all community members, food systems that nourish the community, and an economic sector with an ethic of responsibility to the well-being of the community. Frontline communities (those communities who have borne the costs of past and present extractive energy economies) are the leaders toward a new Energy Democracy.

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