



10/12/2018

RE: Comments on the 2019 Energy Master Plan to the Board of Public Utilities

Submitted by: League of Women Voters of New Jersey

Thank you for your request for public comments regarding the Energy Master Plan. The Energy Master Plan must consider the public good, and the right to clean air and clean water. We understand the state's mandate is to balance the needs of the economy with the needs of the environment and public health.

We would like to first address the 2050 timeline. Recently, the IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change) issued a stern warning that we cannot afford to wait any longer, as a projected 1.5% rise in greenhouse gas is the absolute highest level to sustain us in the future. This is a call for action, not until 2050, but much sooner.

The League of Women Voters of New Jersey appreciates your thorough discussion points and we will only address a few.

General Discussion Points:

1. How should clean energy be defined?

Every form of energy requires energy, so there is no form of energy that is totally clean. For example, making solar panels requires rare earth mining, and that is dirty energy; wind turbines need transmission lines which can leak energy. Nuclear energy may seem to be clean, but the spent fuel is certainly dirty and dangerous. Batteries need recharging, which uses energy. In our opinion, we need to focus first on energy conservation and then on how we can achieve the cleanest and most efficient form of renewable energy possible, in order to reduce our carbon footprint.

2. Should the definition of clean energy contain flexibility between now and 2050 to allow for transitional fuels to be used and phased out over time? What intervening steps should be taken to complete the transition?

No, the definition of clean energy should not allow for transitional fuels to be phased out over time. Instead, we should have a moratorium on all fossil fuel projects including pipelines, gas plants, and compressor stations. Accepting "transitional fuels" and continuing to allow fossil fuel projects will not accomplish our goals. Immediate actions include changing from diesel power trucks and trains to electric, reducing the incentives for large gas guzzling vehicles, implementing new solar panel technology that allows for various placements in different areas of buildings, or even simply urging more sustainable farming and home composting.

Transition and Technology:

How can the State immediately begin to transition to clean energy production and distribution?

Wind energy is achievable within a few years to achieve this Administration's goal of 3,500 megawatts. It was recently reported (NJ Spotlight, 9/18/2018) that the BPU is opening bidding for at least four developers to build up to 1,100 megawatts of capacity off our coast, with bids to be awarded early next year.

The state must do more to educate our residents. Education is the only way to convince our residents of the wisdom of transitioning to clean energy. We must be serious about the rise in global warming; accepting the scientific findings and repeatedly publishing them is critical to this effort. The International Congress of Plant Pathology (ICPP) in a recently released Fifth Assessment report, just reduced the amount of warming degrees beyond which our planet cannot recover to 1.6 degrees. The ICPP is made up of 2,400 scientists representing 88 countries.

Stranded costs are a concern but can be addressed with incentives from the government. There are always innovations and utilities have always adjusted. We have the examples from other countries to follow re: costs of wind energy and how governments have dealt with them. For example, Sweden is on its way to a totally clean energy economy. <https://www.thelocal.se/20180716/sweden-to-reach-2030-renewable-energy-goal-in-2018>

New Jersey is not Sweden, and the more industrialized countries in Europe have not achieved their targets, but according to the World Economic Forum, they are on their way. Most of the target dates are 2030. <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2018/02/these-two-countries-are-the-reason-the-eu-is-hitting-its-ambitious-renewable-energy-targets>)

What statutory or regulatory changes will be needed?

There can be no question as to whether or not the State has the power to "implement these determinations. The State has the authority to enact laws and regulations which ensure the safety and well-being of its residents. We have a history of doing so, whether it was the Hazardous Waste Siting Act, Coastal Area Management Act, Freshwater Wetlands Act, and the Stormwater Act, just to name just a few. Economists can predict how the State can encourage innovative technologies, whether by tax credits or other means. In place of sports stadiums which are built with tax credits and other public money, why not wind turbines?

Environmental Justice:

At your October 4 hearing in Newark, there was testimony from residents about the rates of asthma and other illnesses due to constant polluting vehicles travelling through their neighborhood. This is perhaps the most unequal and underserved area of our State, with increasing health care problems which are a significant cost to our State. It is imperative to address the number of diesel trucks on their way to Port Newark, leaving particulates in their wake. You have heard testimony from residents who do have solutions to transition to a cleaner environment, including incentives for solar panels. Consideration should be given to the environmental and public health costs to residents whether as a result of placing incinerators or from other polluting industries in their neighborhoods. New Jersey has the authority to require increased conservation efforts and greater energy efficiency in its transition to cleaner fuel, whether electric or hydrogen fuel cells. We must have environmental equality for all residents of New Jersey.