

ENERGY AND EQUITY

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The United States of America and South Carolina have taken a giant step forward in the transformation of our, world, nation and the State of South Carolina. Recently, Governor Nikki Haley signed the solar legislation act into law. The Environmental Protection Agency also released its new Carbon Pollution Emissions Standards. These standards will most likely undergird the upcoming 2016 EPA new clean air ruling that will impact the entire country. The new ruling is allowed under Section 111(d) of the 1970 Clean Air Act. Section 111(d) permits the EPA to make changes when necessary to improve and or to protect the health and environment of our nation. The other reason for the new Carbon Pollution Emission Guideline is simple, the science is in. It doesn't matter if an individual believes in climate change or not. Even more important these new standards can open the door to; slowing climate change, improving the health of our citizenry and opening the door to phenomenal economic development and prosperity through the creation of new jobs and businesses, well into the 21st Century. The new models of diversified energy sources coupled with policies and systemic change can virtually lift communities out of poverty and anchor the drifting and dwindling middle class through energy savings.

Here are the proposed new carbon pollution emissions standards in brief. The electrical plants currently using coal, diesel, or steam must reduce the power, carbon and other greenhouse gases they emit by 30% by the year 2030. The energy produced by nuclear plants are to increase .5%, renewables (solar, wind, biomass, etc.) by 2.5% and energy efficiency (weatherization) by 2.5% annual to 2030 and beyond. Therein lies the opportunities for the utilities and cooperatives to grow more business units, contract out services and partner with small and local business to create new ventures and jobs. However, to gain these positive outcomes energy policy must be tied to equity. Not equality. Equality has its advantages but is not enough alone. Many of our communities are in the dire straits that they are today because we mistakenly believe that equal access is a rising tide that lifts all boats. If that were true we would not see specific groups of people attending the same schools, learning from the same teachers, reading from the same books but having markedly different graduating and performance rates. Equity addresses the specific needs of specific groups or communities to improve their lot and the situations of others. An example is the gains made by disabled Americans to have cut outs made on the sidewalks of America. These cut outs helped not only disabled people in wheel chairs etc., but delivery people with hand trucks, mothers with heavy unwieldy strollers, bicyclists and others.

Here is an example of how energy and equity programs and policies can work to benefit all. With the passage of the SC Solar Energy Legislation and the release of the EPA's proposed Carbon Pollution Emissions Standards there is a great need to ensure that equitable solutions are applied to assist low, middle and people of color communities. These groups traditionally have paid a large percentage of their income on energy costs and are often least able to afford those costs. The upcoming related policies must be inclusive and lift all boats from a policy point of view. For example, with the new solar legislation's and possible leasing components, residential customers of electric utilities and cooperatives, leasing solar panels eligibility should be based on their billing history and not their credit history. As victims of predatory loan, foreclosure rates the global removal of jobs, unemployment and the current economic recession, credit history eligibility would exclude a disproportionate number of

low, middle class and people of color communities. While billing history, for example, if your electricity has not been disconnected twice in one year it would include a large number of people in the process. With such solar panel leasing programs in place we also need to ensure that the savings accrued by using clean renewable energy is retained in part by the customers. In order to increase savings, reduce debt, rev up consumer spending and our economy a cap on residential leasing fees from the leasing of solar panels should be no more than 70% of the savings gained. Therefore ensuring that low, middle and people of color communities have more money to meet their financial needs and grow our economy through increased consumer spending. The same energy and equity approaches can be applied in the biomass, wind, nuclear, and energy efficiency aspects of the new directions Americans and South Carolinians must take to meet the challenges of the 21st Century and prevail.

Last but not least the new proposed EPA Carbon Pollution Emissions Standards offer new levels of protection to the health of our citizens. The children and adults suffering from respiratory ailments. The seniors and others who lose their lives every year during fires caused by kerosene heaters or heat strokes because they cannot afford to turn on their electric fans. The changing environment, unnatural migration of wildlife, extinction of species and the mercury contamination of fish caused by pollutants and toxins. Energy, equity, investments, and profits mean little in comparison to our right to life, the pursuit of happiness and the world we live in and cannot live without.