

May 12, 2021

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Majority Leader
U.S. Senate
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The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Joe Manchin
Chairman, Energy & Natural
Resources Committee
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Frank Pallone
Chairman, Energy &
Commerce Committee
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

**RE: CONGRESS SHOULD ENACT A FEDERAL RENEWABLE ELECTRICITY STANDARD AND
REJECT GAS AND FALSE SOLUTIONS**

Dear Majority Leader Schumer, Speaker Pelosi, Chairman Manchin, and Chairman Pallone,

On behalf of our millions of members and activists nationwide, we, the undersigned 697 organizations—including climate, environmental and energy justice, democracy, faith, Indigenous, and racial justice groups—urge you **to pass a Renewable Electricity Standard (RES) in the infrastructure package and reject gas and other false climate solutions to address the climate emergency.**

As Congress prepares to pass a historic infrastructure package and President Biden has globally pledged to slash carbon emissions by 50% below 2005 levels by 2030, we should look to the 28 states, Washington, D.C., and Puerto Rico that have passed Renewable Electricity Standards (also known as renewable portfolio standards), as opposed to only seven states with Clean Electricity Standards (CES).¹ The bold leadership demonstrated in RES-leading states like Hawaii, Vermont, and Washington, D.C. provide a roadmap to building a new renewable energy future. Funding this transition must start with shifting all fossil fuel subsidies to mass renewable energy deployment.

Renewable energy sources are sources that naturally replenish and are most often defined as solar, wind, and geothermal power. In contrast, so-called “clean” energy standards generally encompass these renewable sources but also include other technologies, like gas with or without carbon capture and sequestration, biomass, and nuclear, which are significant sources of pollution and carry a host of health and safety risks. In order to avoid perpetuating the deep racial, social, and ecological injustices of our current fossil-fueled energy system, Congress should ensure that any federal energy standard does not include these dirty energy sources.

Specifically, we write to express our concern that recent Clean Electricity Standard (CES) legislation, including the CLEAN Future Act (H.R. 1512), embed these injustices because they include gas

¹ Center for Climate and Energy Solutions, “U.S. State Electricity Portfolio Standards,” <https://www.c2es.org/document/renewable-and-alternate-energy-portfolio-standards/>.

and false solutions.² The inclusion of gas and carbon capture and storage as qualifying energies in any CES undermines efforts to end the fossil fuel era and halt the devastating pollution disproportionately experienced by Black, Brown, Indigenous, and other communities of color in this country. Even a partial credit for fossil fuel resources that attempts to factor in lifecycle emissions runs the risk of subsidizing environmental harm for years to come.³ Allowing dirty energy to be bundled with clean energy under a federal energy standard would prolong the existence of sacrifice zones around dirty energy investments and delay the transition to a system of 100 percent truly clean, renewable energy.

Instead, we urge Congress to enact a Renewable Electricity Standard (RES) that champions a just energy future and squarely rejects fossil fuels and other false solutions embodied in a CES. Specifically:

- **The RES should achieve a 100% renewable energy portfolio by 2030 for the U.S. electrical grid, consistent with climate science and global equity, with at least a 25% carve-out for distributed renewable energy resources and storage.** Shifting the U.S. grid to zero emissions by 2030 is supported by leading climate scientists⁴ and consistent with the domestic carbon reductions to meet the U.S.’s historical climate debt and equitable fair share to limit global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius, without carbon market mechanisms. Requiring an ambitious carve-out for rooftop and community solar and storage, and other distributed energy resources as part of the RES brings substantial benefits for energy democracy, electricity affordability, climate resilience, and local economic recovery -- and should be deployed first in communities that have disproportionately experienced the energy violence of a fossil-fueled, centralized utility system.
- **The RES’s definition of qualifying energy should include proven renewable energy technologies like solar and wind and exclude gas, carbon capture and storage, biomass, nuclear, and other false solutions.** The RES should include proven renewable technologies including, but not limited to ecologically-sound solar, wind, and geothermal. The definition must exclude all fossil fuels and false solutions, including but not limited

² Letter from over 300 groups to Congress re: Fossil Fuels and False Solutions in 2035 Clean Energy Standard targets, March 18, 2021, https://1bps6437gg8c169i0y1drtgz-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/CES-Sign-on_FINAL-.pdf.

³ Bruce Buckheit, “Review of the Credit Trading System in Title II of the CLEAN Future Act,” April 8, 2021, <https://1bps6437gg8c169i0y1drtgz-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Review-of-2021-CLEAN-Future-Act-FINAL-4.8.pdf>.

⁴ Global 100% RE Strategy Group, “Joint declaration of the global 100% renewable energy strategy group,” 2021, <https://global100restrategygrouppdf.org/>; “Abstracts of 56 Peer-Reviewed Published Journal Articles From 18 Independent Research Groups With 109 Different Authors Supporting the Result That Energy for Electricity, Transportation, Building Heating/Cooling, and/or Industry can be Supplied Reliably with 100% or Near-100% Renewable Energy at Difference Locations Worldwide,” April 7, 2021, <http://web.stanford.edu/group/efmh/jacobson/Articles/I/CombiningRenew/100PercentPaperAbstracts.pdf>. See also Brown, T.W. et al., “Response to ‘Burden of proof: A comprehensive review of the feasibility of 100% renewable-electricity systems,’” *RENEWABLE AND SUSTAINABLE ENERGY REVIEWS* 92: 834-847, 2018, <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1364032118303307>.

to: gas with and without carbon capture and storage and other fossil-based technologies; waste incineration and other combustion-based technologies; bioenergy including biomass, biofuels, factory farm gas, landfill gas, and wood pellets; new nuclear; and new, large-scale and ecosystem-altering hydropower, and all market-based accounting systems like offsets. Energy efficiency and demand-side management technologies must also be paired with renewable energies to vastly reduce energy consumption.

- **The RES must be paired with strong regulations and programs that advance environmental, social, racial, and ecological justice and guarantee 50% of investments in environmental justice communities and support for impacted worker communities.** These include, but are not limited to: (1) programs and incentives to prioritize distributed energy resources and energy efficiency in low-wealth communities and disaster-prone areas first, supporting community-owned energy programs; (2) programs that halt energy burden disparities; (3) aggressive regulations that require reductions of local air pollution emissions; (4) programs that ensure local job creation and high road labor standards throughout the renewable energy supply chain; (5) assurance that environmental and democratic assessment processes, including the National Environmental Policy Act, are implemented and not weakened; and (6) regulations ensuring that any industrial-scale renewable energy projects must be properly sited, building first on degraded lands and avoiding and mitigating all wildlife impacts.

We respectfully urge you to enact a RES to guarantee that monumental investments in our energy system are built on a solid and just foundation. As we look to combat the climate emergency, it is crucial that we invest in solutions that support a just energy future.⁵

Sincerely,

[Signatories begin on next page.]

⁵ For any questions and discussion, please reach out to Jean Su, Energy Justice Director and Attorney at the Center for Biological Diversity (jsu@biologicaldiversity.org), and Lukas Ross, Program Manager at Friends of the Earth (lross@foe.org). We look forward to hearing from you.

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