

Friends,

Here's something you may find of interest. Over the last few months I've been involved in a small working group dealing with renewable energy development from an environmental justice perspective. The basic idea is (1) that the environmental impacts associated with conventional energy technologies are, in some ways, imposed more on minority and low-income communities, and (2) that more emphasis on appropriately scaled renewable energy systems is an obvious way to alleviate/avoid those kinds of impacts while still providing the energy services needed for economic development.

One of the work products of this working group is a resolution <http://www.repp.org>, which is attached as an enclosure. Some members of the working group are now seeking endorsements of this resolution from a variety of organizations. I'm not really doing that, because I've got too many other things to do. Rather, I just went through my email address book and picked out addresses for people who I thought might be interested. If you are interested and would like more information, please let me know.

The other person on this working group with experience in Indian country energy issues is Bob Gough, and you could contact him at: [Rpwgough@aol.com](mailto:Rpwgough@aol.com).

Another person to contact for more information is Virinder Singh at the Renewable Energy Policy Project (REPP) in Washington, D.C. <http://www.repp.org> His email address is: [virinders@repp.org](mailto:virinders@repp.org).

Apparently, there is an effort being financed by fossil fuel interests to make people believe that minority communities would suffer if U.S. policy were to actually get serious about reducing emissions of CO2. This is hogwash, of course, but there is a lot of money behind it.

Please let me know if you are interested in more information on this topic or if you want to discuss it. Maybe I should set up a discussion group on our website.

Best wishes,  
Dean

Dean Suagee (Oklahoma Cherokee) [dsuagee@vermontlaw.edu](mailto:dsuagee@vermontlaw.edu), Director, First Nations Environmental Law Program, Vermont Environmental Law School.

**Resolution on  
Sustainable Energy and Low-Income and Minority Communities  
June 29, 2000**

WHEREAS everyone has the right to safe, clean, affordable, and reliable energy and transportation services;

WHEREAS our children's future, including their health, climate, water and air face serious consequences from our continued dependency on fossil fuels and nuclear power;

WHEREAS low-income, minority, and tribal communities should have full knowledge of and participation in all aspects of energy policy decision-making, yet have been excluded from energy policy design;

WHEREAS low-income, minority and tribal communities suffer disproportionate health and ecological impacts from the energy industry and from energy users, including coal and uranium mining, oil extraction, oil refining, power plant siting, dirty and unsafe industrial practices, and vehicle pollution;

WHEREAS low-income families disproportionately spend more of their income on basic energy services;

WHEREAS homes in low-income, minority and tribal communities severely lack energy efficiency features that ensure heating, cooling, and lower bills;

WHEREAS rising energy demand and the restructuring of the electric industry is unleashing more fossil fuel power plants and extending the operating hours of existing nuclear and fossil fuel plants in low-income and minority communities—thereby degrading the air, displacing other uses of community space, and lowering local property values;

WHEREAS the current state of electric industry restructuring may create higher and more volatile electric rates for residential customers, excessive payoffs to dirty power plants, and inadequate support for cleaner energy options, despite its potential to advance cleaner, more affordable energy;

WHEREAS transportation policies that promote urban sprawl, encourage greater reliance on gasoline and diesel fuel, and neglect mass transit seriously affect low-income, minority, and tribal communities through air pollution, increased health problems and fewer job opportunities;

WHEREAS increased energy efficiency, renewable energy sources such as solar and wind, new energy technologies such as fuel cells, and cleaner transportation fuels such as natural gas offer significant yet virtually untapped potential to improve the environment; supply affordable energy to meet diverse needs; foster energy independence; create jobs in low-income, minority and tribal communities; and lessen global warming;

Therefore, we the undersigned call for the following:

All parties that affect the energy system must commit to working with local communities, particularly low-income and minority communities, as equal partners when making energy choices;

Utility and environmental regulators must prevent further clustering of fossil fuel and nuclear power plants in low-income and minority communities by including equity criteria and cumulative environmental impact assessments in the siting process;

Federal and state legislators, utility and environmental regulators, and energy providers must work with local communities to maximize energy efficiency measures in all communities, so low-income, minority and tribal communities in particular can benefit from a higher quality of life, greater energy independence, and lower bills;

Federal and state legislators, utility and environmental regulators, and energy producers must shift our present energy supply from fossil fuels and nuclear toward cleaner energy sources such as solar, wind, and fuel cells in all affected communities as appropriate and in ways that create living-wage jobs and build community wealth;

Federal and state legislators and utility regulators should adopt electricity restructuring policies that offer affordable and stable electricity rates to low-income communities, shun subsidies to nuclear and fossil fuels, and expand cleaner energy solutions;

Fuel companies must commit to mass-producing cleaner fuels while operating refineries in ways that do not pose health and environmental risks to the surrounding community or threats to worker safety;

Industries in low-income, minority and tribal communities must commit to adopting the cleanest available energy options available through lower materials use, energy efficiency, renewable energy, and cleaner fuels;

Federal and state governments must consult with tribes to supply technical and financial resources for renewable energy and energy efficiency while respecting their unique sovereign status;

Environmental justice groups, low-income energy advocates, clean energy advocates, community development organizations, labor unions, energy providers, elected officials, and local citizens must commit to working together to craft clean, affordable local energy and transportation models.