



Central Coast Climate Science Education
Dr. Ray Weymann ray.climate@charter.net

A Guest Post by Mr. George Williams

Two Sources of Critical Energy & Climate Information

While Democratic presidential candidates debate the details of health plans, the Trump Administration is waging multiple attacks to undo the many initiatives that states developed over the decades to improve public health by containing and reducing pollution. States, where the details of these initiatives were developed over the years, now find themselves fighting a rear-guard action against the federal government to preserve these programs. For over half a century, states have been fully engaged in negotiating the path to a cleaner, healthier environment. After years where children were advised not to go outside on many days, where forests in the east coast were decimated by acid rain, and after the river in Cleveland was so polluted that it caught fire, early efforts led to the creation of the EPA and the Clean Air and Clean Water acts.

Years of negotiations dealt with localized problems (such as toxic hot spots), regional fights (such as mid-western coal plants versus the down-wind eastern states) and world-wide crises (such as the ozone hole, or climate change). A key element of these initiatives was the fundamental work by federal agencies to create a fair system to set the health baselines and work to empower state initiatives to achieve their health goals.

Over the years we have seen that the policies adopted around the US have been successful in bending the curve of pollution, and experience has shown that developing advanced low carbon technologies also happens to be good business. But the Administration is attempting to roll back the clock by undoing these success stories, and it can be hard to track all the initiatives that they are putting in play. For those interested in getting a perspective on the wide array of legal fights around the country a great tool has been developed, housed in New York University School of Law, that tracks the

struggles between state Attorneys General and the federal government. NYU's study provides regular updates on activity, through its newsletter "Legally Speaking" and in particular focuses in detail on six proposed federal rulemakings that would by themselves undo years of work (the clean power plan for the coal industry, clean car and "glider" truck standards for automotive emissions, and rules for methane emissions from stationary sources, from public lands, and from landfills). These six industry sectors alone represent half of all annual US greenhouse gas emissions. Putting the Administration's thumb on the scale on these industries -- as they are pushing to do -- would cripple action on climate.

Now there is a way to keep track of these multiple efforts, and of the fight by multiple state Attorneys General to avoid catastrophic shifts in emissions policy. You can access the NYU site, and follow its newsletter by going to the State Energy and Environmental Impact Center at the NYU school of law at www.law.nyu.edu/centers/state-impact

As an example, going to this site and clicking on "clean energy and energy efficiency" under "The Issues in Focus", an important summary "Protecting and advancing clean energy mandates" describes what the Attorneys General from various states are doing to ensure that the steps to advance the use of clean energy are protected against efforts by the present administration to negate them.

The second study demonstrates that, ironically, the Trump Administration's goal of rolling back regulations to free up economic development has the perverse effect of dampening the economic growth that is being provided by advanced energy technologies.

As to jobs, the US Department of Energy estimates that as many Americans now work in clean energy jobs as work in retail nationwide, and twice as many work in clean energy as work in construction. Renewable technologies also now contribute nearly as much energy to the US electric grid as does the existing fleet of nuclear plants.ⁱ) And as a result of our investment in clean energy, industrial power prices in the US are among the lowest in the world, helping lure economic development back to the US.ⁱⁱ On top of those impacts, the advanced energy market place is a trillion dollar international market in which the Trump Administration proposals would drag down US participation. So, we are not sacrificing jobs in the energy industries as we shift to more advanced technologies. Quite the opposite. And, except for some of the

solar panel manufacturing, these are mostly jobs that cannot be outsourced overseas.

Details of this annual national assessment of the state of advanced energy technologies and their impact on jobs and the economy, are available from the national Business Council for Sustainable Energy (developed with Bloomberg New Energy Finance). To access this data, go to <http://www.bcse.org/> and click on the “2019 Sustainable Energy Factbook”. There are several annual reports if you want a look back on the data for recent years as well. A good place to start browsing this valuable website is to read the Executive Summary which will give an overview of the contents. You can then pick and choose items of particular interest. The net story these studies tell is not only that the Administration’s policy is wrong-headed from a climate perspective, and a public health perspective, but its policies are a perverse drag on the job creating industries of the future.

ⁱ In 2018 about 17% renewables (mostly hydropower and wind) vs. 19% nuclear (see <https://www.eia.gov/energyexplained/electricity/>)

ⁱⁱ From the executive summary on page 8 of the 2019 Sustainable Energy Factbook referenced below: “The U.S. is 2nd only to Canada with the lowest industrial electricity prices among the G7 nations.” (A nationwide average of about 6.8 cents per kWh, but there are large regional variations.)