



Policy Paper on Fossil Fuels and the Federal Government  
Produced by the Policy Subdivision with Supervision From The Political Director

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# Youth Ideas on What the Relationship Between the Federal Government and Fossil Fuel Corporations Should Be

## Introduction

In recent years, climate change has posed more and more of a threat to the Earth and its inhabitants through increasing temperatures, more extreme weather, and flooding on coastal land. Because of these consequences, many have come to the realization that we need to rethink our energy system. Out of nine people who answered whether they believed in human-caused climate change, all but one said that climate change was real and all but 2 said it was the greatest threat to the planet today along with the threat of nuclear war. The largest source of climate change in the world by far would be fossil fuel emissions. Fossil fuels, when burned, release greenhouse gasses, mainly carbon dioxide, that trap heat in the atmosphere and increase the temperature of the Earth leading to changing climates across the world. As fossil fuel companies are the largest drivers of climate change, support has grown in favor of federal regulation. But, there have also been fears over what would happen to communities that rely heavily on cheap fossil fuel energy. This problem begs the question of what the relationship should be between the federal government and fossil fuel companies. To find solutions and opinions, we surveyed members of our organization. Eleven individuals participated in our policy discussion on *Remesh.ai* with further discussion on *Zoom*. Signups for upcoming Policy Problem Discussions on future topics can be found at [events.yacu.org](https://events.yacu.org).

The policy discussion was conducted to find opinions and solutions for policies and problems. This paper is meant to convey the findings of the discussion as well as educate and inform the reader. All policy papers follow the goals of YACU by informing young Americans about political issues and allowing them to engage in discussion to share their views.

## **Do you believe in human-caused climate change?**

When asked whether they believe climate change is engendered by human activities, an overwhelming eighty-nine percent of participants in our Policy Problem Discussion said yes, adding that “the evidence is clear and the acceleration of warming is far faster than ever before”. Indeed, scientific claims - or to be more precise: mainstream and nonpartisan scientific claims - back up this judgment. Human activities have been found to be associated with changes in climate drivers such as atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub> and sea level. Specifically, studies suggest that human’s extraction of fossil fuels is one of the primary causes of the increase in temperature<sup>1</sup>. Since a greater share of our participants also agreed that “immediate actions [against climate change] are necessary,” it may be inferred that regulations for fossil fuels may be well-received.

It is, however, worthwhile to note that those who took part in our survey were primarily young adults, and the opinion landscape on the matter of human-caused climate change is vastly polarized. The generational gap in this particular subject is palpable. The proportion of American adults who understand that global warming is mostly anthropogenic is only fifty-five percent, according to a study conducted by Yale University and George Mason University<sup>2</sup>. Despite concrete evidence from the scientific community, a considerable share of adults do not agree that climate change is human-caused or is happening at all. The difference between generations may be explained using their ideological disparity. The older crowds are relatively less progressive than their younger counterparts; that is, they prefer little government intervention in economic activities. Admitting climate change is human-caused means allowing the government to step in and regulate the fossil fuel industry, which contradicts their ideology.

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<sup>1</sup> “How Do We Know That Humans Are the Major Cause of Global Warming?” Union of Concerned Scientists, 2018, pp. 1–8, <https://www.ucsusa.org/resources/are-humans-major-cause-global-warming>.

<sup>2</sup> Leiserowitz, Anthony et al. Climate change in the American mind. Yale Program on Climate Change Communication. 2019, doi:10.17605/OSF.IO/CJ2NS

The complex and rather confusing politics of climate change also partly divert public opinion. The incumbent U.S President Donald Trump once called climate change “a hoax”, in which he spoke on behalf of the skeptics of humans’ role in climate change and the entirety of the problem. In spite of that, he recently cited a reduction of the U.S carbon emission, implicitly acknowledging climate change and fossil fuels impacts<sup>3</sup>. The president’s apparently inconsistent environmental agenda most definitely engenders polarized or indecisive viewpoints. Along with indeterminate leadership on the matter, fossil fuel lobbying groups and industry-backed junk science studies act in accordance with their interest. Oil and gas companies, along with their trade groups, have spent 17 million USD advertising on Facebook alone<sup>4</sup>. Strong media presence of such dilutes the mainstream evidence of climate change.

All in all, a divisive public perspective on whether climate change is anthropogenic renders it unlikely for any substantial policy about fossil fuels to be passed without inciting major controversy. Nonetheless, the overtaking generation appears to be more progressive and more willing to tackle the issue of climate change.

## **What do you believe is the greatest threat to the planet today?**

According to the results of our Policy Problem Discussion on the issue of “What should the relationship between the federal government and fossil fuel corporations be?,” our participants perceived that the greatest threat to the planet today was surprisingly not climate change. Even as climate change was part of all the responses, the consensus was overwhelmingly global leadership and the threat of nuclear war - some might say a difference without a distinction.

Each of these responses received 78% support among our participants, the highest out of any response for this question. Of the four, all of them

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<sup>3</sup> Worland, Justin. “Donald Trump Called Climate Change a Hoax. Now He’s Awkwardly Boasting About Fighting It.” Time Magazine, 2019, <https://time.com/5622374/donald-trump-climate-change-hoax-event/>.

<sup>4</sup> Influence Map, Big Oil’s Real Agenda on Climate Change, 2019, <https://influencemap.org/report/How-Big-Oil-Continues-to-Oppose-the-Paris-Agreement-38212275958aa21196dae3b76220bddd>

mentioned global warming as one of, what they believed to be, the most pertinent threats to the planet, but only one of them appointed it as their top threat. Two of the other respondents stated that nuclear war was the top threat, while the last respondent was the only one who stated that global leadership was the top threat. Although this can be interpreted many different ways, it's safe to assume that the issue of global leadership and nuclear war are two sides of the same coin; seeing as how correlative both of these threats are to each other.

The interesting aspect about these results is how they allow us to see how the youth of today perceive both of these threats as a result of recent history. On one hand, we have the 24-hour cycle of television constantly perpetuating the constant fear of nuclear war, something we have not seen since the cold war era.<sup>5</sup> On the other we have the constant fear perpetuated by the scientific world about the pertinent issue of global warming and the destructive effects it can and will have.

Looking at the former, many will remember the nuclear missile false alarm that Hawaii received January 13th of 2018, putting the island in a state of mayhem for the almost 40 minutes that the alarm stayed active. Similarly, you may also remember Trump's very own "fire and fury" blunder with Kim Jong Un.<sup>6</sup> These are just two very recent examples of our country's run-in with nuclear threats, without even counting the numerous threats from North Korea that continue to this day. Looking at it from the way the media has reported the risks, it makes sense why so many young people would have nuclear war as their top threat. This is very consistent with global polls published by the Pew Research Center, saying that 55% of people across the globe agree that North Korea's nuclear program is a major threat to our country.

Looking at the other issue of global warming, the details are much more complex. Rather than being a problem that has come and gone out of the spotlight, it has instead increasingly grown in importance as time has passed. With every subsequent year, new reports are released supporting the existence of global warming. Just last year the Intergovernmental Panel on

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<sup>5</sup> Jeremy Lybarger, "The Threat of Nuclear War," Monitor on Psychology (American Psychological Association), accessed June 27, 2020, <https://www.apa.org/monitor/2018/03/nuclear-war>.

<sup>6</sup> Peter Baker and Choe Sang-hun, "Trump Threatens 'Fire and Fury' Against North Korea If It Endangers U.S.," The New York Times (The New York Times, August 8, 2017), <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/08/08/world/asia/north-korea-un-sanctions-nuclear-missile-united-nations.html>.

Climate Change (IPCC) released a report expressing serious concerns about the possible impacts of climate change in the near future.<sup>7</sup> With climate models, scientists were able to predict some of the effects that would prolong as a result of global warming such as increases in: mean temperature in most land and ocean regions, hot extremes in most inhabited regions, heavy precipitation in several areas, and the probability of drought and precipitation deficits in some regions.<sup>8</sup> According to the Pew Research Poll cited earlier, of the 26 nations inquired, 13 named climate change as their top international threat. All countries considered, climate change is among the highest priority threats with 67% of international respondents saying that it is their top threat, compared to 59% of Americans.<sup>9</sup> Seeing as global warming is often just categorized as the destructive nature of climate change, then it is safe to equate the two when discussing these polls.

In general, both climate change and nuclear war are two of the biggest threats that the world currently faces. This is not to be taken lightly, with both events seeming closer than ever. It is no coincidence that the youth of today is paying this much attention to issues like these.

## **Do you think renewable energy can replace fossil fuels effectively in the near future?**

Today, almost every product that a person uses is in some shape or form is produced, shipped, or requires some form of fossil fuels. Take for example coal, due to how coal's combustion is efficient and cheap, and how its effects are for the most part not immediately detectable, this makes coal greatly convenient to energy companies who need a cheap, stable, and compatible energy source.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Jacob Poushter and Christine Huang, "Climate Change Still Seen as Top Global Threat, but Cyberattacks Rising Concern," Pew Research Center's Global Attitudes Project (Pew Research Center, May 31, 2020), <https://www.pewresearch.org/global/2019/02/10/climate-change-still-seen-as-the-top-global-threat-but-cyberattacks-a-rising-concern/>.

<sup>8</sup> "Summary for Policymakers," Global Warming of 1.5 °C, accessed June 27, 2020, <https://www.ipcc.ch/sr15/chapter/spm/>.

<sup>9</sup> Jacob Poushter and Christine Huang, "Climate Change Still Seen as Top Global Threat, but Cyberattacks Rising Concern," Pew Research Center's Global Attitudes Project (Pew Research Center, May 31, 2020), <https://www.pewresearch.org/global/2019/02/10/climate-change-still-seen-as-the-top-global-threat-but-cyberattacks-a-rising-concern/>.

<sup>10</sup> "Could Renewable Energy Completely Replace Fossil Fuels?," Shell Global, accessed July 5, 2020, <https://www.shell.com/energy-and-innovation/the-energy-future/scenarios/shell-scenario-sky>

It is because of this, that the logic for most people is that the only way that renewable energy sources will ever be able to overtake fossil fuels is if they are able to undercut fossil fuels substantially enough that the cost of transferring all current energy equipment to new renewable source equipment becomes cost-effective.

The problem with this seemingly necessary occurrence is that for many types of renewable energies, this is unlikely to happen unless some truly great breakthroughs occur. This is such the case with thermal energy, even as thermal energy has continued to be studied for several decades, the cost of it has not gone down significantly enough for its use to multiply. Instead something that will most likely need to happen is that the cost of fossil fuels rise.<sup>11</sup> Surprisingly, this was something that was already on its way before the Covid-19 pandemic hit.

Due to many reasons such as dependency, declining extraction, and increasing production cost, the use of fossil fuels have actually been falling in recent years. Dependence for example can easily be shown by the correlation between the U.S. bull and bear markets to the strength of crude oil prices. As long as this dependence exists, the risk of some major supply or demand disaster will continue to threaten greatly those countries that most depend on crude oil.

Aside from this, the pace at which we are able to find new crude oil sources has been declining since 1964. Furthermore, it has only been due to our new and improved technology that we have even been able to continue extracting crude oil from certain sources like for example due to fracking. Were this to continue, at some certain point we will inevitably run out of fossil fuel sources and if we are not already prepared to quickly transition to clean energy from that, then it could quickly prove an even greater threat to human civilization than climate change itself.

Lastly, the price required in order to incentivize the extraction of crude oil has been rapidly increasing since 2000, in which it was just \$20, to now

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[/could-society-reach-the-goals-of-the-paris-agreement/can-renewables-replace-fossil-fuels.html](#).

<sup>11</sup> Tomas Kåberger, "Progress of Renewable Electricity Replacing Fossil Fuels," Global Energy Interconnection (Elsevier, December 13, 2018), <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2096511718300069>.

where tempting crude oil prices range anywhere between \$60 and \$80 per barrel.<sup>12</sup>

In conclusion, the replacement of fossil fuels may in many cases be closer than first expected although it will probably not be fully incentivized by the complete efficiency of renewable energy but instead by the impending decline of fossil fuels.

## **To what extent should the government value the environment over the economy?**

When asked “to what extent should the government value the environment over the economy”, 80% of participants agreed that the environment should have government protections that prevent overexploitation of the environment. 80% of participants also agreed that the environment should be protected in a renewable way “to be used for future generation(s)”. A common idea was that the environment should be valued higher than the economy, which was favored by roughly 60% of participants. Another common thread among the majority of responses is that the two perspectives are closely linked: policy that helps one can hurt the other, leading to the importance of a healthy balance. However, one response (favorable by 60% of participants) also pointed out that developments in renewable energy can stimulate rather than delay economic growth.

There are benefits and drawbacks to favoring either side of the scale. Proponents of environmental regulation claim that reductions to air and water pollution protect public health while saving billions of dollars in costs relating to the illnesses from pollution. These include some cancers, respiratory diseases, and heart issues<sup>13</sup>. “As for the environment as a whole, fewer species will go extinct from climate change and there would be fewer natural disasters, costing billions of dollars to clean up.”<sup>14</sup> Opponents of environmental regulation point out the associated economic slowdowns and

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<sup>12</sup> Post Carbon, “Rising Cost of Fossil Fuels and the Coming Energy Crunch,” OilPrice.com, July 12, 2011, <https://oilprice.com/Energy/Energy-General/Rising-Cost-Of-Fossil-Fuels-And-The-Coming-Energy-Crunch.html>.

<sup>13</sup> Hannah Li, “Why Environmental Regulation Is Good for the Economy,” *Wharton University of Pennsylvania*, November 8, 2016, <https://publicpolicy.wharton.upenn.edu/live/news/1545-why-environmental-regulation-is-good-for-the>.

<sup>14</sup> Hannah Li, “Why Environmental Regulation Is Good for the Economy.”

increases in unemployment that have followed increased environmental regulations<sup>15</sup>. Additionally, some fear that regulations will lead to increased rates of plant closures and layoffs<sup>16</sup>. Other relevant consequences include the increased barriers to entry for small businesses due to more costly regulation, the effect on energy prices, and the capacity for consumers to adapt.<sup>17</sup> It is up to the policymakers and the public that elects and influences them to perform a cost-benefit analysis in order to determine beneficial solutions to the issues facing both the environment and the economy.

## **Should the government change its approach in using energy subsidies i.e concentrating more on nuclear/renewable energy?**

Currently, the federal government provides much support for fossil fuels, most notably in the form of energy subsidies. The estimates of exactly how much money goes into these subsidies ranges greatly, as what exactly defines a subsidy is another contentious topic. It is generally agreed to be around \$20 billion<sup>18</sup>, although many estimates range far higher<sup>19</sup>. The value of contracts for these companies and consumer-end welfare to help with getting cheap energy needs to also be weighed. The uncertainty over the exact amount is due to how the energy subsidies manifest themselves; in tax breaks very predominantly<sup>20</sup> for parts of the extraction of fossil fuels and in a myriad of other ways, making it hard to pinpoint exactly how much money would be spent. The government also subsidizes green energy, but these

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<sup>15</sup> Ann Ferris et al., "The Impacts of Environmental Regulation on the U.S. Economy," United States Environmental Protection Agency, July, 2017, 6, <https://www.epa.gov/environmental-economics/working-paper-impacts-environmental-regulation-us-economy>.

<sup>16</sup> Ann Ferris et al., "The Impacts of Environmental Regulation," 4.

<sup>17</sup> Ann Ferris et al., "The Impacts of Environmental Regulation," 7.

<sup>18</sup> Environmental and Energy Study Institute (EESI). "Fact Sheet: Fossil Fuel Subsidies: A Closer Look at Tax Breaks and Societal Costs." *EESI*, Environmental and Energy Study Institute, 29 July 2019, [www.eesi.org/papers/view/fact-sheet-fossil-fuel-subsidies-a-closer-look-at-tax-breaks-and-societal-costs](http://www.eesi.org/papers/view/fact-sheet-fossil-fuel-subsidies-a-closer-look-at-tax-breaks-and-societal-costs)

<sup>19</sup> David Coady, Ian Parry. "Global Fossil Fuel Subsidies Remain Large: An Update Based on Country-Level Estimates." *IMF*, 2 May 2019, [www.imf.org/en/Publications/WP/Issues/2019/05/02/Global-Fossil-Fuel-Subsidies-Remain-Large-An-Update-Based-on-Country-Level-Estimates-46509](http://www.imf.org/en/Publications/WP/Issues/2019/05/02/Global-Fossil-Fuel-Subsidies-Remain-Large-An-Update-Based-on-Country-Level-Estimates-46509)

<sup>20</sup> Caperton, Richard W. "Good Government Investments in Renewable Energy." *Center for American Progress*, 10 Jan. 2012, [www.americanprogress.org/issues/green/reports/2012/01/10/10956/good-government-investments-in-renewable-energy/](http://www.americanprogress.org/issues/green/reports/2012/01/10/10956/good-government-investments-in-renewable-energy/)

subsidies are spread out to other green technologies<sup>21</sup>. The Congressional Budget Office found that around \$16 billion went in direct subsidies to green energy as of 2016<sup>22</sup>, part of a trend of increased subsidies for renewables that has gone on for the past few decades. However, the issue is very disputed, and both sides make fair points as to why our current system should change or why we should keep the status quo.

From the side supporting change, to concentrate more on nuclear and renewable energy, this subsection generally advocates from the viewpoint that it would help us better combat fossil-fuel caused climate change. First, the lessening of subsidies and shifting of them to green energy would let green energy be more competitive on the market. This would make green energy more profitable to use and thus more widespread, leading to a faster replacement of fossil fuels. Additionally, this would push the high-capital fossil fuels and energy companies to further invest in green technologies rather than in coal, oil, or natural gas. Although exact estimates vary, it has also been determined that removing all fossil fuel subsidies would remove around 5% of emissions<sup>23</sup> which would be a necessary move to a greener America. The proponents of it claim that moving subsidies to green energy would also help to generate jobs in wind, solar, or other green energies in the more remote parts of America which depend now on fossil fuel extraction, a dying industry. An example of this is coal mining, a business whose numbers are declining<sup>24</sup>, where more subsidized wind farms could provide new jobs in those areas to keep them strong while fossil fuels die out. Lastly, many supporters of that change argue that it is morally wrong to continue giving subsidies and support to the industries that are polluting our world, smogging our skies, and as a result, raising our sea levels.

However, the status quo is supported by many for sensible reasons. First, many status quo supporters point out that the heavy subsidies for fossil

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<sup>21</sup> "Kenneth Alston, Katy Sartorius "Federal Financing Programs for Clean Energy." *Congressional Budget Office*, 2016, <https://www.cbo.gov/system/files/115th-congress-2017-2018/reports/52521-energytestimony.pdf>

<sup>22</sup> Dinan, Terry. "Federal Support for Developing, Producing, and Using Fuels and Energy Technologies." *Congressional Budget Office*, 29 Mar. 2017, [www.cbo.gov/system/files/115th-congress-2017-2018/reports/52521-energytestimony.pdf](https://www.cbo.gov/system/files/115th-congress-2017-2018/reports/52521-energytestimony.pdf)

<sup>23</sup> "U.S. Energy Information Administration - EIA - Independent Statistics and Analysis." *U.S. Energy Information Administration (EIA)*, 24 Apr. 2018, [www.eia.gov/analysis/requests/subsidy/](https://www.eia.gov/analysis/requests/subsidy/).

<sup>24</sup> "All Employees, Coal Mining." *FRED*, 5 June 2020, <https://fred.stlouisfed.org/series/CES1021210001>

fuels allow us to have the second lowest cost for fuel in the world<sup>25</sup> and very cheap energy. This enables strong economic growth<sup>26</sup> and lets the poorest parts of society keep homes warm in winter, lights on at night, and better their education. The cost of the subsidies is heavy, yes, but helps the welfare of our society greatly. Secondly, many bring up that the government is already supporting green energy: \$16 billion in subsidies, favorable loans and federal financing<sup>27</sup>, and also not having to deal with the heavy environmental regulations that the fossil fuel industry has to deal with. As such, green energy is already very favored, and the status quo of subsidies is good. Many also state that the subsidies for fossil fuels support natural gas much more than oil or coal<sup>28</sup>, which helps a cheap energy source that is cleaner than coal or oil be able to replace those. It isn't perfect and does not achieve a 0% emissions level they admit, but natural gas is better than coal and oil and letting it replace them faster will keep cheap energy to help society while lessening our emissions. In a very direct counter to one of the change faction's arguments is that many believe that taking away the subsidies would make us lose more jobs in already stagnating states, such as West Virginia. Additionally, they point out that the emissions we may cut are minimal and are not worth the harm to society, with it being calculated at only 1-5% if we cut every single subsidy for fossil fuels<sup>29</sup>. Higher fuel prices can cause heavy public unrest and anger, as shown very clearly by the Yellow Vest riots in France. People with higher bills, whose homes can't be warm in winter and the lights can't be kept on at night, don't care much about losing a small percent of emissions, a tiny dent in the climate crisis causing a major blow to their wallets and livelihoods. All in all, many agree that some change is needed, but the idea that it should be reform and not revolution with subsidies and many of the other changes we need are already trending.

Looking ahead, we cannot keep fossil fuels forever, including the subsidies for them. The energy market is changing, and no doubt

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<sup>25</sup> "USA Gasoline Prices, 22-Jun-2020." *GlobalPetrolPrices.com*, [www.globalpetrolprices.com/USA/gasoline\\_prices/](http://www.globalpetrolprices.com/USA/gasoline_prices/)

<sup>26</sup> Stern, David. "The Role of Energy in Economic Growth." *EconPapers*, 28 Apr. 2012, <https://econpapers.repec.org/paper/eencepwp/0310.htm>

<sup>27</sup> Dinan, Terry. "Federal Support for Developing, Producing, and Using Fuels and Energy Technologies." *Congressional Budget Office*, 29 Mar. 2017, [www.cbo.gov/system/files/115th-congress-2017-2018/reports/52521-energytestimony.pdf](http://www.cbo.gov/system/files/115th-congress-2017-2018/reports/52521-energytestimony.pdf)

<sup>28</sup> "U.S. Energy Information Administration - EIA - Independent Statistics and Analysis." *U.S. Energy Information Administration (EIA)*, 24 Apr. 2018, [www.eia.gov/analysis/requests/subsidy/](http://www.eia.gov/analysis/requests/subsidy/).

<sup>29</sup> "Removing Fossil Fuel Subsidies Will Not Reduce CO2 Emissions as Much as Hoped." *International Institute of Applied Systems Analysis*, 8 Feb. 2018, <https://iiasa.ac.at/web/home/about/news/180208-Fuel-Subsidies.html>

government policy will in some way follow. Making sure we, as future or current voters, and the people we vote or campaign for, are educated in the reality of the situation, will let us make pragmatic progress to balance the needs of society and the climate for the betterment of us all.

## **What should the relationship between the federal government and fossil fuel corporations be?**

In regards to the general direction the federal government should take towards renewable and more efficient energy, 75% expressed the sentiment of incentivizing and subsidizing renewable energy (including nuclear energy), placing greater protections for the environment, and taxing fossil fuel corporations. Additional suggestions were given as to the relationship between the federal government and fossil fuel corporations, each suggestion garnering 63% in agreement: that the government should serve to prevent monopolies and enforce emissions and environmental agency standards; that fossil fuel companies shouldn't get any subsidies as long as they cause more harm to the environment than good, as we shouldn't reward destroying our planet; we shouldn't over-regulate the companies but use a system where companies have a limit and lower this limit each year- that if you allow companies to sell their leftover to companies who can't lower their output is good, but something like a carbon tax is a bad idea. One approach which 50% agreed on, is that we have an enforced but gradual conversion from fossil to renewable energy for the good of the environment, but that we shouldn't let these companies have any more say in the regulations the government passes than the votes of the average citizen.

The primary benefits of deriving energy from fossil fuels is that they are easier to convert into energy and, with the amount of global resources we presently have, are readily available.<sup>30</sup> Furthermore, they can be conveniently transported from place to places, with different methods being employed for different fuel types, such underground pipelines.<sup>31</sup> Plants can be established and function worldwide in the production of energy, whereas renewable energy plants would be limited solely to areas where there would be optimal efficiency.<sup>32</sup> Among the economic bonuses it provides over renewable energy

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<sup>30</sup> <https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/guides/z8k9v9q/revision/2>

<sup>31</sup> <https://www.conserve-energy-future.com/pros-and-cons-of-fossil-fuels.php>

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

are the opportunities it provides a wider job market, with 1.1 million US citizens employed in the production of fossil fuels as of 2016.<sup>33</sup>

However as climate change is occurring at a faster pace, the disadvantages of fossil fuels can no longer be ignored. In the course of a few short years, the planet has experienced several catastrophic incidents such as the growth in lethal hurricanes, the growing number of wildfires in the US and worldwide,<sup>34</sup> and the rising sea levels are all but a few indicators of global warming and the threat of climate change.<sup>35</sup> The questions on every government's mind are what measures should be taken and what should presently be done with fossil fuel companies?

Introduced by Sen. Ron Wyden in 2019, the Clean Energy for America Act amends the Internal Revenue Code to replace the 44 existing energy tax credits with three technology neutral tax provisions that would incentivize the use of low and zero-emissions technologies, including clean electricity, clean transportation and energy efficiency.<sup>36</sup> The Act also would function to provide for a transition period for the new tax incentives, the bill temporarily extends several existing energy-related tax provisions.<sup>37</sup> Another act reintroduced by Sen. Christopher Coons in 2019 is the Financing Our Energy Future Act, which has bipartisan sponsorship, calls for the inclusion of renewable energy into the Master Limited Partnerships. The MLPs combine the investment advantages of publicly traded corporations with the tax benefits of partnerships. While shareholders still pay personal income tax, the MLP itself is exempt from corporate income taxes. More than three-quarters of MLPs are fossil fuel companies and excludes corporations involved in renewable energy.<sup>38</sup> The result would be that renewable energy companies would be able to partake in the economic benefits provided for MLPs while also not infringing on fossil fuel companies benefits that it shares in the partnership. Back in 2017, Rep. Tulsi Gabbard introduced the Off Fossil Fuels for a Better Future Act which, among other provisions, calls for the complete termination of government subsidies of fossil fuel corporations, instead

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<https://www.energy.gov/downloads/2017-us-energy-and-employment-report#:~:text=In%202016%2C%2055%20percent%2C%20or,advanced%2Flow%20emission%20natural%20gas.>

34 <https://www.carbonbrief.org/factcheck-how-global-warming-has-increased-us-wildfires>

35 <https://climate.nasa.gov/evidence/>

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<https://www.eesi.org/papers/view/fact-sheet-fossil-fuel-subsidies-a-closer-look-at-tax-breaks-and-societal-costs>

37 <https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/senate-bill/1288>

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<https://www.eesi.org/papers/view/fact-sheet-fossil-fuel-subsidies-a-closer-look-at-tax-breaks-and-societal-costs>

shifting entirely to clean energy sources.<sup>39</sup> The Act also provides that by 2027, 80% of electricity sold must come from clean energy sources, then transitioning to 100% by 2035. Along with the transition of automobiles and other forms of transportation to operate with clean energy and release zero emission.

Many of these acts were incorporated into the Green New Deal, a package of US legislation designed to address the struggle against climate change and the pursuit towards renewable energy, which was proposed by an overwhelming amount of left-wing Democrats. When more than 600 environmental organizations sent a letter to each member of Congress in support of the Green New Deal, one of their goals was for the ending of government subsidies and an expansion of the Clean Air Act of 1963.<sup>40</sup> Several supporters have been skeptical of the GND of being too optimistic in terms of time and money, as well as it's ambiguity in regards to the impact on the job market following the transition from fossil fuels to clean energy.

There are several approaches in how the federal government should proceed in dealing with fossil fuel corporations. Some call for the gradual termination of subsidies granted to companies while others call that it should be more immediate and abrupt. As the years go by and we are forced to make more drastic decisions, we will most likely come across more and more of cleaner energy legislation. What's important is to sooner rather than later, that we combat climate change now and pass adequate legislation that is suitable for the transitioning of our present situation to the situation of tomorrow.

## Conclusion

It is undeniable that the youth of America believe that there are great threats that we, as a nation, will need to tackle in the near future. Whether you think that human-caused climate change or nuclear warfare are the greatest threats, both are potential dangers that need to be solved. We see youth over the nation fighting for what they believe in, fighting for campaigns that they believe will enact legislation to steer the nation into the

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[https://www.congress.gov/bill/115th-congress/house-bill/3671#:~:text=By%202035%3A%20\(1\)%20100,train%20engines%20must%20be%20electrified.](https://www.congress.gov/bill/115th-congress/house-bill/3671#:~:text=By%202035%3A%20(1)%20100,train%20engines%20must%20be%20electrified.)

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<https://earther.gizmodo.com/more-than-600-environmental-groups-just-backed-ocasio-c-1831640541>

direction they wish to see. There are many candidates that have taken sides on whether they support alternative fuels or not. There are candidates that do not believe in human-caused climate change. Vote and support those that share your opinions. If you don't see the right candidate that fits your views, look into running for office when you are eligible, granted that you do the proper research into being an educated candidate in the policies you promote.

The future is in the youths' hands. With an upcoming election season this November, in this tumultuous year of 2020, we have an opportunity to stand up for what we believe in and create the future we want to live in. If you are eligible, register to vote to ensure you can support the candidates you like. If you have the time (which many do, thanks to stay-at-home orders) virtually volunteer for candidates' election campaigns. If you aren't able to do those things, you can always try to be educated on climate change, fossil fuels, and other various topics that you may be interested in. Read articles from trustworthy sources. Discuss with friends, families, peers, and others about the topic. Learn other people's perspectives on the issue of human-caused climate change. Do your part, no matter how small you think it is, in shaping America to the nation you want it to be.

## **Disclaimer:**

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