

We're in the Defining Decade for Our Climate Crisis: Minnesota's greatest threat, Minnesota's greatest opportunity.

Responding to the Minnesota Senate Clean Energy First Proposal

Minnesota needs to dramatically cut climate change pollution by 2030. And our planet needs to eliminate world greenhouse gas emissions by 2050.

We have solutions across each sector that will build a brighter, healthier, more equitable, more livable future for everyone. These solutions are where we must invest.

Our future needs everyone at the table. Thank you for having this discussion.

As written, this proposal takes us backward by changing definitions to include:

1. Garbage burning (mixed municipal solid waste) as a form of "renewable" energy.

Garbage incinerators have serious negative consequences on the communities that surround them and the broader world. In addition to highly elevated levels of respiratory disease, other health impacts include neoplasia, congenital anomalies, infant deaths, miscarriage, pre-term delivery and cancer.¹

While this is currently in Minnesota's renewable energy standard definition of renewables (and we would like to see that changed), it is not in the resource planning statute as renewable and should not be added there.

2. Coal or gas plants that emit carbon and capture 80% of those emissions – then injecting that carbon into the ground to push out more oil – as a "carbon free resource."

Carbon capture and storage technology (or CCS) for coal or gas plants is

- Extremely energy intensive – requiring additional fossil fuel burning in order to power the capture of the carbon it produces.
- Adds expense to an already costly energy source, rather than moving to less expensive renewables.
- Federal subsidies for carbon capture only encourage continued investment in coal and gas instead of a quick transition away from these sources.

3. Nuclear power as a preferred "carbon free resource" and repeals MN's nuclear moratorium.

No utility across the country is proposing a new nuclear plant because the costs are too high and we have no permanent storage solution for waste that must be stored for a quarter-of-a-million years. Minnesota enacted a moratorium on new nuclear power in 1994.

This proposal *rolls back* the power of the existing statute to prioritize clean energy.

4. By reducing the requirement from planning for *all* energy needs to only *new* energy needs.
5. By allowing coal and fracked gas with partial carbon capture to count as clean energy.
6. By exempting energy produced outside Minnesota.

In order to meet climate goals, Minnesota must

Ask the Most Important Question:

What amount of greenhouse gas emissions will be reduced from this proposal?

Policies that might have been useful to shift from fossil fuels to clean energy if enacted a few years or decades ago are now insufficient to meet the emissions reductions that science demands.

Every action we take must be with clear expectations of how this action will either reduce or add to the emissions causing our climate crisis.

Avoid Dead-End Pathways:

The legislation in 2007 set goals for greenhouse gas emissions reductions to 80% of 2005 levels. This is good, but not good enough. We now know we need to get to zero net emissions by 2050 (or much faster).

Here is why this distinction is critical:

What changes when you are trying to get to zero versus a reduction by 80%?

If you are trying to reduce your carbon footprint by 80%, you can invest in energy efficiency and cleaner forms of fossil fuels. You can move from coal to natural gas. Move from coal to carbon capture of that coal.

But if you need to get to zero emissions, those investments can't take you all the way. They are dead-end pathways. They can make you look good by 2030, but then whole systems will need to be reconstructed to go the final distance.

We don't have time to invest in dead-end pathways.

Achieve a Just Transition for Workers and Communities:

We applaud the consideration this proposal gives to support workers and power-plant communities as we transition from fossil fuels to our better future.

It is critical that the transition benefit all communities: alleviating the burden and health impacts caused by poor air quality and felt most acutely by communities with lower incomes and communities of color. We can't uplift one community if it is at the expense of the health and well being of another.

The future we want in Minnesota is a future where we all thrive. Together.

References:

ⁱ https://www.no-burn.org/wp-content/uploads/Pollution-Health_final-Nov-14-2019.pdf