

Clean Energy Now Article:

Help Rebuild the Economy by Supporting the Clean Energy Option

This is another in an ongoing series of articles by members of the North Haven Clean Energy Task Force. We are working to encourage North Haveners to sign up for the CT CleanEnergyOptions program as part of their electricity utility. For every 100 residents who sign up, the town will receive 2 free solar panels from the Connecticut Clean Energy Fund.

We are facing very hard economic times, but there is much hope that the new Administration will be taking steps to revive the economy. One important strategy is “*to invest in alternative and renewable energy, end our addiction to foreign oil, address the global climate crisis and create millions of new jobs*” (www.white.house.gov). Sometimes this is called building the new “Green Economy.” Recent reports about the Connecticut and local economy make it very important to support our Administration’s efforts. One immediate way to help build the “Green Economy” is to sign up now for the CleanEnergyOption through your electric utility bill.

What is the green economy? To some, the green economy sounds like some throwback to the 1960’s counterculture and “going back to the land.” However, it should be seen as solid economic development policies that can revive our devastated economy. “*At its most basic level, the green economy is the clean energy economy, consisting primarily of four sectors: renewable energy (e.g. solar, wind, geothermal); green building and energy efficiency technology; energy-efficient infrastructure and transportation; and recycling and waste-to-energy. The green economy is not just about the ability to produce clean energy, but also technologies that allow cleaner production processes, as well as the growing market for products which consume less energy, from fluorescent light bulbs to organic and locally produced food. Thus, it might include products, processes, and services that reduce environmental impact or improve natural resource use.*” (Defining the Green Economy: A Primer on Green Economic Development, Center for Community Innovation, UC-Berkeley). Most important, switching to clean energy is recognized as the core part of green economic policy.

When one reviews the above description of the green economy, it is possible to list many jobs that can be generated, for example, in 2 areas:

Retrofitting Buildings: electricians, heating/air conditioning installers, carpenters, construction equipment operators, roofers, insulation workers, carpenter helpers, industrial truck drivers, construction managers, and building inspectors.

Wind and Solar Power: environmental engineers, iron and steel workers, millwrights, sheet metal workers, machinists, electrical equipment assemblers, electrical engineers, electricians, industrial machinery mechanics, welders, metal fabricators, electrical equipment assemblers, construction equipment operators, industrial truck drivers, industrial production managers, first-line production supervisors, installation helpers, laborers, and construction managers.

Other sectors - biofuels, mass transit and energy efficient automobile production - can generate a host of more jobs.

As these clean energy companies grow, they will expand their workforce, hiring both skilled and unskilled workers in the types of jobs listed above. How many jobs? According to a 2001 study by the Renewable Energy Policy Project, wind and solar photovoltaic (PV) industries offer 40% more jobs per dollar than coal. The study also reported that in California, over 1.5 million jobs have been created as a result of energy efficiency policies over the last 35 years, generating \$45 billion in payroll. A 2004 report by researchers at the University of California, Berkeley, stated that *“the renewables industry consistently generated more jobs per average megawatt generated in construction, manufacturing and installation, in operations and maintenance and in fuel processing, than the fossil fuel industries.”*

So – just how does signing up for clean energy help build this economy? It is the simple law of supply and demand. If more customers support clean energy, there will be greater incentives to invest in generation using clean, renewable sources like wind, water and solar power. Households that sign up for clean energy create more demand, especially for wind and hydro power. The two choices, Sterling Planet and Community Energy, both obtain their power from wind and hydroelectric sources. When you sign up, you increase the demand for those energy sources and therefore help support clean energy production companies. Both Sterling Planet and Community Energy buy a percentage of the clean energy power from regional sources which helps our regional economy. Also, as more people sign up for clean energy, the town will receive more solar collectors, stimulating growth for solar companies (while lowering energy costs for our town!).

How do you sign up and/or receive more information? You can go to the North Haven Clean Energy Task Force page on the North Haven town web site to download a sign up form: <http://www.town.north-haven.ct.us/Government/CleanEnergyTaskForce.asp> You can also pick up a form at town hall or the library. Finally, our Task Force needs more members to help in this important effort. Please call 203-248-6685 to find out more.