21st Century Energy Policy for Iowa: Moving Beyond Coal

Mission Statement

The Iowa Chapter will support policies and will undertake projects that will achieve a healthy sustainable and secure energy future. We support policies that
- protect public health
- curb global warming
- protect our legacy of lands and water from harmful energy production
- reduce America's oil dependence
- expand production of renewable energy and energy efficiency
- stop the coal rush and clean up existing power plants
- prevent destructive energy development
The Iowa Chapter of the Sierra Club supports an energy future that revolves around the use of clean and renewable energy, such as wind, solar and geothermal, with reduced dependency on coal and nuclear technologies. With renewable technology, people will not be freezing in the dark. Already we have seen the energy generation dynamic move toward wind, with over 36 percent of the energy used in the state generated by wind turbines.

To support this vision, bold new policies need to be implemented:

- Energy efficiency and conservation will be a key component.
- A renewable energy standard needs to be implemented.
- Policies should promote renewable energy, including consumer-owned distributed generation.
- At the same time, wind turbines and transmission lines need to be sited to protect birds and bats and to avoid natural areas.
- The roll-out of the smart grid is supported and encouraged.
- A moratorium should be made to stop building new coal-fired utility plants and industrial plants.
- Nuclear energy should not be given special incentives and regulatory preferences.

**Energy Efficiency**

1. An energy efficiency standard (EES) of at least 2 percent of total sales reduced each year for all utilities – municipals, rural electric cooperatives and investor-owned – selling electricity, natural gas and heating fuels.
   - If a utility sells any combination of natural gas, heating fuels and electricity, the energy efficiency standard should be met individually by the electricity sales, the natural gas sales and the heating fuel sales.
   - A utility that sells any combination of electricity, natural gas and heating fuels should not be able to average the energy efficiency of those sales.
   - Likewise, a utility should not be able to trade or exchange the amount it exceeds in one product with another product.
   This includes only permanent energy efficiency measures, not demand response.

2. The Iowa Chapter supports demand-response programs that allow power companies to selectively cycle customer equipment off when the peak usage load is being reached. Another component of demand response programs is smart grid technology that enables customers to run smart thermostats and smart appliances in their homes and businesses that cycle off for periods of time when electricity demand and costs are high.

3. All state buildings should be highly energy efficient. All new construction of publicly funded buildings should meet sustainable design standards.

4. Any company that receives state government subsidies or benefits for building or remodeling must be required to make the building or remodeled building energy efficient. This includes any building receiving tax increment financing (TIF), since the state government is required to
supplant the portion of the property tax money that is diverted from the school districts when local jurisdictions agree to TIF projects.

5. The Iowa Chapter supports building codes that encourage high-efficiency, private-sector buildings.

6. The Iowa Chapter supports transferring the energy efficiency programs to a third-party administrator who will provide uniform and consistent energy efficiency programs for all Iowans, regardless of the utility provider.

Renewable Energy

1. The Iowa Chapter believes that state government policies should promote renewable energy.

2. The Chapter supports policies that promote consumer-owned distributed generation.

   - The Iowa Chapter supports policies that would enable community-owned power arrangements where several families or businesses would be allowed to collectively purchase a renewable energy generator and to operate the unit for their collective benefit.
   - The Iowa Utilities Board needs to set up a department to deal with barriers consumers face when attempting to install distributed generation and to assist the consumer in resolving issues with utilities.
   - The Chapter supports policies that allow cities who are customers of investor-owned utilities or rural electric cooperatives to install renewable energy projects for the benefit of all residents and businesses in those cities.
   - The Iowa Chapter supports policies to allow feed-in tariffs (also called clean contracts, renewable energy or energy independence payments).
   - The Iowa Chapter supports lending programs, such as PACE, that allow property owners to borrow money to install renewable energy generation or energy efficiency projects, such as solar panels. The Property Assessed Clean Energy (PACE) program involves a city or county raising money from the bond market, loaning the money to property owners for the project, adding the amount of the bond payment to the property tax bill and then paying off the bond as property taxes are paid each year.

3. The Iowa Chapter supports a renewable energy standard (RES) that requires each utility to supply 100 percent of the electricity consumed in Iowa by 2030 be from renewable resources.
   - The Chapter supports a requirement that all electricity bills be required to report the percentage of the electricity that is produced or purchased by the utility that is produced by renewable sources, coal, nuclear, natural gas, hydroelectric, and other enumerated sources.
   - The electric bill should also list the amount of electricity purchased from its customers who have locally owned renewable energy devices and are selling the energy to the utility.
- All utilities including municipals, rural electric cooperatives and investor-owned should be required to meet the renewable electricity standard.
- Renewable energy sources include solar, wind, geothermal and biomass.
- Nuclear energy is not a renewable energy source.
- The utility can own the renewable energy source or can purchase the energy from a generation company.
- Renewable energy transmitted out of state cannot be counted toward the renewable energy standard.

4. Adequate surveys need to be conducted prior to the siting of wind turbines and transmission lines in order to avoid natural areas and to protect bird and bat habitat and migration pathways.

5. The Iowa Chapter encourages the Iowa Utilities Board to develop pilot projects to test technology, rate structures, oversight and processes of electricity generation that will be changing as the state moves into the next generation of power generation.

**Upgrading the Grid**

1. The Iowa Chapter supports implementation of the smart grid throughout the state.

At the same time, the Chapter supports an opt-out option for those who do not want to participate in having a smart meter installed on their home.

Because some individuals believe that they are sensitive to the electromagnetic radiation emitted by some of the smart grid technology, the Chapter supports the funding of studies to determine the side-effects of smart grid technology on sensitive populations and what procedures need to be taken to reduce the risks. Any implementation of smart grid technology should be done in a manner to protect privacy of customer data as well as to provide overall security of the functioning of the grid.

2. The Chapter encourages the Iowa Utilities Board to review the transmission and distribution capacity throughout the state in order to ensure that the grid has enough capacity to supply high quality power to all Iowans and that plans are in place for upgrades in areas that appear to be reaching capacity. Further, the review needs to be done in light of changes that will be occurring due to installation of distributed generation and community renewable energy projects.

**Moratorium on New Coal**

1. The Iowa Chapter of Sierra Club supports a moratorium on new coal-fired power plants, including industrial plants. Unless a plant is able to sequester carbon from day one, the plant should not be built.

2. The Iowa Department of Natural Resources should increase the number of fish tested for mercury each year and should be testing fish from more water bodies.
Nuclear Energy Phase Out

1. The Iowa Chapter supports a moratorium on the building of new nuclear power plants.

2. Nuclear power plants should not be given special incentives and regulatory preferences in order to build.

3. Consumers should not be required to pay for the nuclear power plant before it is built. The rate-making principles should be the same for nuclear power as they are for natural gas, wind or coal power.

Transportation

1. The Iowa Chapter supports transportation policies that promote public transportation and other transportation alternatives to reduce the impact of trucks and personal vehicles. These alternatives include:
   - Support for expansion of railroads for freight;
   - Support encouraging passenger rail in Iowa; encouraging the development of spur connections; expanding Amtrak service in Iowa, including lines extending from Chicago to both Dubuque and Iowa City;
   - Support light rail between and in major cities in Iowa;
   - Support expansion of bus routes;
   - Support for park-and-ride parking areas so that people can commute to a point where they can catch light rail or a bus;
   - Support for policies that require any urban street project funded with state taxpayer dollars needs to have sidewalk on at least one side of the street;
   - The Chapter supports increased funding for transit in Iowa;
   - The Iowa Chapter supports policies that allow denser mixed use communities. This will result in smarter land use where residents can reduce trip length between their homes and businesses.