

National Caucus of Environmental Legislators

# Making the Case for Renewables as an Affordable Solution

## Overview

This resource helps legislators communicate about how deploying renewable energy is a solution for energy affordability. It provides intuitive narratives and supporting evidence to help legislators explain why our historic fossil-fuel-based energy system creates added costs for ratepayers and how renewables can help make energy more affordable.

## Our current energy system has challenges.

**Core Message:** We have an old energy system that requires costly fossil fuels, often from distant places. In the process, we've let a global market increasingly influence what we pay for electricity.

### Our energy system is old.

- Over 70% of coal-, gas-, and petroleum-powered power plants are expected to reach the end of their lifespan by 2035. ([Science](#))
- If we were to keep slated-for-retirement fossil fuel plants online until 2028, it could cost ratepayers \$3 billion per year. ([Grid Strategies](#))
- Fossil fuel technology is also outdated, polluting technology. Air pollution from fossil fuels costs the average American \$2,500 per year in medical bills. ([World Economic Forum](#))

### Our current energy system requires costly fuel, often from distant places.

- War, natural disasters, and infrastructure failures all make it more difficult and expensive to get fossil fuels. ([IEA](#))
- For example, when Russia invaded Ukraine, U.S. energy bills went up because of disruptions to the global energy supply. Similar shocks are occurring as a result of the ongoing conflict with Iran. ([EIA](#); [Brookings](#)).

### We're letting a global market influence what we pay for electricity.

- Fossil fuel markets are global: coal, gas, and oil produced within the U.S. are often sold to other countries if it's more lucrative for the producer. This can increase domestic energy prices. ([Louisiana Illuminator](#) via Public Citizen).



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# Renewables are more reliable and cheaper than other forms of energy.

**Core Message:** Renewables can help solve the problems our original energy system created.

## Renewables boost affordability.

- 91% of new utility-scale renewable energy projects deliver power cheaper than the cheapest fossil fuel alternative. ([IRENA](#))
- We've already started integrating more renewables, and we've seen no correlation between higher energy costs and more renewables. In fact, states that deployed the most renewables from 2019 to 2024 – Iowa, New Mexico, and South Dakota – saw some of the largest decreases in electricity rates. ([CATF](#))

## Renewables are proving their resilience.

- Once you build a wind or solar farm, it runs on free, abundant, domestically sourced fuel for the rest of its life. Wind and sunlight are not controlled by anyone or disrupted by conflict and war.
- New offshore wind is keeping the lights on and bills low during winter storms; solar and batteries are doing the same during heatwaves. ([Canary](#); [Canary](#))

### But what about natural gas?

- Natural gas as a fuel can be cheap at times, but as soon as a geopolitical conflict happens or cold snap hits, it often drives prices up. ([EIA](#); [U.S. Congress](#))
- It's becoming more time-intensive, difficult, and costly to build new natural gas plants due in part to turbine shortages. New turbines will be available in 2029 at the earliest. ([Marketplace](#); [POWER](#))
- Gas plants create billions of dollars in community health impacts. ([RMI](#))

# Americans agree we can improve our energy system with renewables.

**Core Message:** If we keep updating our system with renewables, our bills will keep getting cheaper. This is a shared belief among most Americans.

## Most Americans agree that renewable energy is necessary, affordable energy.

- 83% of Americans believe that solar should be used to strengthen and increase the U.S. energy supply. ([American Energy First](#))
- 72% of Americans believe renewable energy is essential to meeting our energy needs. 53% think clean energy is cheaper or costs the same as fossil fuels. ([Potential Energy](#))



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