

**Frances Beinecke's Blog**

## **Obama Promotes Clean Energy and Clean Air in the State of the Union**



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In last night's State of the Union Address, President Obama presented a bold, confident plan for leading America into the future, and he placed clean energy solutions at its center. These technologies, he said, will help our nation "win the future."

The president got it right: clean energy solutions will make our workers more competitive, our companies stronger, our country more secure, and all of us healthier.

He also got it right when he said that clear clean energy targets will help us realize those benefits:

"Clean energy breakthroughs will only translate into clean energy jobs if businesses know there will be a market for what they're selling. So tonight, I challenge you to join me in setting a new goal: by 2035, 80 percent of America's electricity will come from clean energy sources."

I applaud the president's ambitious goals in striving to boost clean energy generation in the United States. Many states have already achieved impressive gains with their own clean energy targets—targets that have attracted private investment and generated jobs. But the specifics are important. A true clean energy standard will foster more renewable electricity and energy efficiency and encourage us to leave behind old, dirty technologies we've propped up for too long already.

The president also stood up for the health of the American people over the special interests of big polluters who want to choke our air with endless clouds of life-threatening pollution. He underscored the role smart government protections play in keeping our families safe, and made clear his intention to enforce them:

"I will not hesitate to create or enforce commonsense safeguards to protect the American people. That's what we've done in this country for more than a century. It's why our food is safe to eat, our water is safe to drink, and our air is safe to breathe. It's why we have speed limits and child labor laws."

Those lawmakers seeking to undermine the Clean Air Act and the Environmental Protection Agency's ability to reduce dangerous pollution should take note. Now is not the time for these big polluters and their allies in Congress to take the nation backward to darker, dirtier days. Now is the time to move ahead with cleaner energy solutions that protect our families and generate jobs for American workers.

Innovators are creating these solutions right now, but the government can help unleash their full potential. President Obama reminded us that from the transcontinental railroad to the Internet, government incentives and research funds have brought our nation tremendous benefits. The president pledged to spur our nation's best minds to do the same with clean energy.

I welcome his funding plan for these investments: he called on Congress to eliminate \$4 billion in taxpayer money that we currently hand over each year to oil companies and other fossil fuel producers. “Instead of subsidizing yesterday’s energy, let’s invest in tomorrow’s,” he urged.

Clean transportation solutions are a central part of that future, and the president called for expanding 21st century technologies such as linking our cities via high-speed rail, developing sustainable biofuels, and putting 1 million electric cars and other advanced technology vehicles on the road by 2015. Each one of these efforts will generate jobs for American workers.

In the end, this is why the clean energy future can deliver what Americans are looking for. The same solutions that cut carbon pollution also create jobs, enhance national security, and sharpen our advantage in global markets. They also protect our children from respiratory illness and decrease our reliance on foreign oil. They provide a vision our divided nation can rally around.

President Obama recognized in his address that we may argue over mechanisms and policies, but the clean energy future is a common purpose that should unite us all.