

21st Century Energy Policy for Iowa

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
- prevent destructive energy development



Photo by National Renewable Energy Laboratory

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. The caps that limit the amount of money a utility company can spend on energy efficiency programs should be removed.
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 Commission (formerly 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 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.

Photo by National Renewable Energy Laboratory

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.
 - 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 Commission 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.

Nuclear Energy Phase Out

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