Promoting Equitable Access to Clean Energy Alternatives


WHEREAS, the cost of not making the transition to energy efficiency and clean energy is disproportionately borne by communities of color and low income communities who disproportionately host polluting toxic facilities thereby resulting in loss of lives, lowered property values, lost days of schools (compromising educational potential), lost days of work (affecting wages and compromising promotion potential), and shortened life spans due to increased morbidity; and communities of color and low income communities are also most impacted by the results of climate change, including loss of life, livelihood, property, and culture, which are tied to over-reliance on fossil fuel based energy production; and

WHEREAS, it is essential that the United States find ways to assure universal affordable access to a clean energy portfolio to prevent the recurrence of environmentally racist policies and practices that often contribute to the disproportionately high rates of exposure to pollution from fossil fuel and nuclear based energy production and toxic waste that have plagued African American, Latino, Native American and other communities of color and low income for decades; and

WHEREAS, energy provides a basic yet vital foundation for economic opportunity and social advancement in low-income and communities of color across the United States; and

WHEREAS, included in these innovations are distributed energy resources that can be placed on a home or property and provide electricity directly to the citizen, and if any excess electricity can be sold to the local utility; and

WHEREAS, the price of solar is declining and in some states is becoming cost competitive with other fuels; and

WHEREAS, for the first time in history solar may present an opportunity for some low income families to produce their own energy and get out from under the cycle of paying up to 30% of annual monthly income for energy bills; and

WHEREAS, the National Black Caucus of State Legislators (NBCSL) has urged state and federal lawmakers to adopt fair, equitable, and non-regressive financing models to aid low-income households and communities to become more energy efficient (NBCSL Resolution ETE-14-32 (2014)); and

WHEREAS, the price of solar is dropping so fast that solar stands to become an important avenue out of energy poverty for many communities, provided that appropriate policy mechanisms are in place to ensure equitable access for all consumers; and
WHEREAS, when deployed under equitable policy frameworks, distributed generation of solar energy, rather than exporting energy dollars of communities, can be an avenue to produce locally owned energy and create good paying local jobs; and

WHEREAS, the solar industry currently employs 119,016 Americans and solar employment grew 13.2 percent over the past year, making it one of the fastest growing industries in the country. And distributed solar located within communities would bring jobs to local communities as local ownership brings 2 to 3 times more jobs per kilowatt than centralized energy systems; and

WHEREAS, several models for affordable access to solar power for low-income families exist, such as group discount programs, affordable leases, and community solar installations; and

WHEREAS, government oversight of electricity providers should continue to ensure the availability and universal access to clean energy while keeping prices fair and transparent.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People will continue to support the deployment of clean energy sources, specifically solar and wind power, especially distributed solar located within local communities, and will advocate for pricing structures that are fair and do not unduly burden low income ratepayers; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the NAACP will continue to support programs and policies that ensure affordable access to clean energy options for all; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the NAACP advocates for equitable and sustainable job training and job opportunities to low- to moderate-income African American residents within communities of color; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that utility companies be required to connect to the local producers to whom they distribute energy; and

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED that the NAACP will transmit this Resolution to state legislatures and public utility commissions that are considering renewable energy cost allocation policies.

Revised 2/20/2015