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Local Clean Energy Advocates Gather At Town Hall Meeting to Discuss The Future of Michigan's Clean Energy Economy

Elected officials, Business representatives, and academic experts Join the Sierra Club, Clean Water Action (CWA), the Michigan League of Conservation Voters (MLCV) and other advocates to talk green jobs

Grand Rapids, MI, September 1, 2009 – Elected officials, concerned citizens, and a diverse coalition of economic and conservation advocates gathered for a town hall meeting at Aquinas College tonight to discuss the future of job creation in Michigan. The topic of discussion was clean energy, and how this emerging industry is the solution that our state so desperately needs to put our manufacturing sector's unparalleled talent back on the job.

The American Clean Energy and Security Act (ACES), commonly referred to as the "climate bill", passed the U.S. House of Representatives in June and is currently awaiting action in the Senate. This bill has been called the most important piece of environmental legislation in history by those familiar with it, and while its incredible benefits to our natural resources should not take a backseat, the impacts for Michigan go far beyond the environment.

Extensive studies of the job creation potential from the bill have been performed, and the news is great for Michigan. Time and time again, these studies have shown the distinct advantages of renewable energy sources and development over outdated sources of power production, such as coal. In a study performed by [NextEnergy Center](#) for the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality, renewable energy projects such as wind and solar farms were found to provide much higher net employment benefits to the state. This is because the projects are typically smaller in scale, which makes the labor involved more consistent, and the projects are generally much more labor intensive, as opposed to fossil-fired projects which are generally much more capital intensive. In addition, the massive capital investment required for a typical coal plant, approximately \$1 to \$5 billion, is a cost that is passed directly to the consumer. Perhaps the best factor in all of this is that renewable projects are increasingly produced and sourced locally in state, whereas large-scale coal plants are typically built using out of state contractors. This keeps money and jobs here in Michigan. (source: *A Study of Economic Impacts from the Implementation of a Renewable Portfolio Standard and an Energy Efficiency Program in Michigan*, NextEnergy Center for the MDEQ, April 2007)

"The most important thing to remember about clean energy versus dirty coal is that clean energy projects will create jobs in Michigan from the start to finish of a project and will

allow Michigan citizens to create their own power, and in some cases be compensated by the utility companies for generating that power,” said Jan O’Connell, Clean Energy Organizer with the Sierra Club. “When you compare that to a coal plant with an average price tag of \$3 billion, which will end up on our utility bills and create fewer, temporary jobs, the choice seems pretty clear.”

[The American Council for and Energy-Efficient Economy](#) (ACEEE) has found that clean energy investments create approximately 17 jobs for every \$1 million in spending, compared to about 5 jobs for every \$1 million invested in fossil-fuel technologies. (source: *Clean Energy Investments Create Jobs in Michigan*, Policy Research Institute, June 2009)

“There are so many reasons to support this policy: national energy security, protecting the environment for future generations, and cleaning up the Great Lakes,” said Marta Johnson of Clean Water Action. “The list goes on and on, but frankly, the number one reason for Michigan right now is job creation. We need to make sure that Senators Levin and Stabenow understand this and vote yes on this bill.”

State Representative Mike Huckleberry (D-Greenville) was a panelist at the event, and he highlighted one of Michigan’s best examples of a clean energy manufacturing turnaround stories. His district is home to [United Solar Ovanic](#), one of the leading solar manufacturing operations worldwide. When the Electrolux plant left Greenville seeking cheaper labor in Mexico, state and local officials stepped up and courted Uni-Solar, creating hundreds of desperately needed jobs in the community. Representative Huckleberry emphasized that Michigan is ranked #2 in the nation for renewable energy potential citing our unrivaled research universities, our incredible manufacturing workforce, and our unparalleled natural resources. Touting Uni-Solar as a model example, he said: “Not cleaning the environment costs job, cleaning up the environment creates jobs.”

As Michigan residents continue to demonstrate their creativity and resilience through these tough economic times, there has never been a more critical time to take bold, intelligent steps to transform our state’s economy. The research has been performed, and the public supports actions that will incentivize a clean energy economy. Our Senators’ support of this legislation is critical to Michigan’s economic recovery.

“We’ve run out of time to argue and combat misinformation from special interests on this issue,” said Bill Kirk, Communications Director for the Michigan League of Conservation Voters, “the citizens of Michigan are willing and able to work, and this is an opportunity to put them back on the job. We can’t afford to stall on this one.”

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