



# KANSANS FOR CLEAN ENERGY

jobs. rural prosperity. sustainable resources.

## Senate Utilities Committee Testimony in Opposition to SB 170 – The RASP Act

Rabbi Moti Rieber, Director of Kansas Interfaith Power & Light  
Testifying on behalf of Kansans for Clean Energy

Mr. Chairman, members of the committee, thank you for hearing me today. My name is Rabbi Moti Rieber, and I am the director of Kansas Interfaith Power & Light, a statewide organization that works with people and congregations of all faiths in moving toward a clean energy future. I am also here today representing Kansans for Clean Energy, a coalition of energy, rural interests, agriculture, faith and environment organizations. We are united in our opposition to SB 170, the so-called RASP bill.

Let us start off with the values we share with you. Like you, we care about Kansas and its prosperity as a place to live. We are especially concerned about our water resources and the future of our agriculture sector. We know that access to water is one of the most pressing issues we face as a state. And we know that climate change is making that situation worse<sup>1</sup>.

I'm a person of faith, as many of you are, and I believe we are tasked by our Creator to be faithful stewards of Creation. We can do better in this regard – a lot better. And one of the most important things we can do to be good stewards right now is to address the changes occurring because of our reliance on coal for our electricity.

We have been listening to presentations and hearings in this room for the past couple of weeks and the phrase that we haven't heard much is "climate change." But that's what underlies this whole issue. The Attorney General's testimony said that the Clean Power Plan "picks winners and losers based solely on the EPA's policy preferences." This is absurd. The Clean Power Plan is based on the fact – the fact – that the earth is getting warmer as a result of human activities, and that we have a responsibility to our own kids and grandkids, as well as billions of people in this country and around the world, to do something about it.

Secondly, EPA's actions are legal. There has never been any limit on the amount of carbon dioxide that power plants can spew into the atmosphere – none. That's irresponsible, and it poses an increasing present danger to the way we live our lives. In 2007, the US Supreme Court ordered the extension of the Clean Air Act to include global warming pollution<sup>2</sup>. After the EPA's subsequent issuance of an endangerment finding, EPA not only has the legal authority to act, it has the *obligation* to act.

Third, Kansas is already succeeding. We've already lowered our carbon emissions by 19%, roughly 7 million tons, since 2005. We have expanded our renewable sector dramatically since the adoption of the Renewable Portfolio Standard in 2009 – and we can go further. We have barely scratched the surface on distributed solar and demand side management, such as energy efficiency. We believe, and there are studies that show, that with the right determination and effort we could get to 50% carbon-free by 2050.<sup>3</sup>

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1 <http://nca2014.globalchange.gov/report/regions/great-plains>

2 Massachusetts v. EPA, 549 U.S. 497 (2007)

3 <http://thesolutionsproject.org/infographic/#ks>; <http://www.iea.org/roadmaps/>

Fourth, jobs. The same study, from Mark Jacobsen of Stanford University, indicates that transitioning to clean energy will mean thousands of good Kansas jobs, in research and development, manufacturing, weatherization, grid management, installation, maintenance – and these are local jobs that cannot be outsourced, that are held by people who will live in our towns, shop in our stores and send their kids to our schools.

Fifth, costs and benefits. We've certainly have heard a lot of speculation about anticipated costs of the Clean Power Plan. One of the problems with the RASP bill is that it just asks for a cost analysis, without looking at any of the potential benefits, such as health savings or job growth, so any analysis would need to look not simply at costs but at benefits as well. But let's also consider the cost of not acting on climate: the rising health costs that accumulate on a record number of 100 degree days; the costs of developing access to fresh water if our wells and the aquifer dry up; the costs of severe weather events. In 2012 alone, Hurricane Sandy cost \$65 billion, and the drought in the Midwest and Plains states cost \$35 billion.<sup>4</sup> The White House estimates the cost of climate change impacts at \$150 billion per year.<sup>5</sup> Overall, Kansas has been part of 25 separate billion-dollar climate disaster events since year 2000.<sup>6</sup> Many of these have a climate fingerprint.

Even from a strictly free-market perspective, the Clean Power Plan makes sense. As I mentioned, old power plants can put unlimited amounts of CO2 into the atmosphere – with the taxpayers paying the health and environmental costs. No other industry has that advantage – and that skews the market. Put a limit on carbon emissions, and you'll see how fast renewables and efficiency grow. You'll see the market truly at work.

To conclude: climate change is real, it's here, it's predominantly caused by human activity, it poses a clear danger to our way of life, and certainly to the lives and livelihoods of our children and grandchildren. We have a moral obligation to act. We have the means and the ability to act, and doing so will have some costs, yes, but more significant economic benefits.

Mr. Chairman, members of the committee: Kansans for Clean Energy wants to make it clear that we support the goals of the Clean Power Plan. It is the most effective means we have developed thus far to deal with the challenging problem of unchecked carbon pollution. We also agree with the other conferees that we much prefer a state plan be developed in a transparent process that takes into account the interests of Kansans. The RASP bill is not of Kansas origin, and virtually guarantees a federal plan. We don't want the legislature hamstringing the responsible state agencies from developing a plan that uses the most effective mechanisms to meet our clean energy goals. But what we really don't want to see is our state, our legislature, fail in its responsibility - its obligation - to act on the most morally significant issue of our time – the challenge of global climate change. Please, vote no on SB 170.

Thank you for your attention.

I'm happy to answer any questions at the appropriate time.

Addenda:

- Petition signed by 100 Kansas Clergy in support of the Clean Power Plan
- Story about 100 major US businesses supporting effective climate action through the CPP.

Kansas Interfaith Power & Light

Climate + Energy Project

Kansas Sierra Club

Kansas Natural Resource Council

Kansas Rural Center

Kansas Farmers Union

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4 <http://www.usatoday.com/story/weather/2013/01/24/global-disaster-report-sandy-drought/1862201/>

5 <http://insideclimatenews.org/carbon-copy/20140729/white-house-150-billion-year-will-be-cost-climate-inaction>

6 <http://www.ncdc.noaa.gov/billions/events>