



EESI UPDATE

A periodic update to friends of the Environmental and Energy Study Institute on our work in policymaker education, coalition building, and policy development.

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Environmental Rollbacks Will Hit Legal Barriers: The Clean Power Plan Example

ON OCTOBER 10, Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Administrator Scott Pruitt began the effort to repeal the Clean Power Plan. The Clean Power Plan was a key part of the Obama Administration's efforts to address climate change; it would have required states to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from existing power plants 32 percent by 2030 (vs. 2005 emissions). The Trump Administration argues that the Clean Power Plan regulations were overly burdensome and on a precarious legal footing. In general, the current administration has signaled it will be pushing hard for deregulation across the board, with environmental regulations being a prime target.



The United States Supreme Court has ruled that EPA is legally required to address carbon emissions.

But deregulation will not be as easy as one might assume. The Clean Power Plan, for instance, was developed after the Supreme Court ruled that EPA is legally required to address carbon emissions, if they harm public health.

In fact, EPA was created in 1970 by the Nixon administration with (at first) the sole purpose of implementing the Clean Air Act. This law mandates that pollutants be removed from the air when they are detrimental to human health.

The decision in the Massachusetts v. EPA lawsuit determined in 2007 that greenhouse gases were air pollutants under the Clean Air Act. This spurred research into the effects greenhouse gas emissions from motor vehicles have on human health,

which resulted in the 2009 “Endangerment Finding.” So what exactly is the Endangerment Finding? It includes two parts:

- Six greenhouse gases, including carbon dioxide, endanger the public health and well-being of current and future generations.
- Emissions from motor vehicles contribute to the greenhouse gas emissions that are endangering public health.

Thus, the Endangerment Finding required EPA to regulate greenhouse gas emissions from vehicles! Later lawsuits continued to uphold this. Additionally, in a later lawsuit, this finding was extended to include “stationary sources” (such as power plants) as harmful contributors as well.

With the EPA legally obligated to regulate greenhouse gas emissions, repealing the Clean Power Plan is not simple. But the federal government has some options. The first option would be to reverse the Endangerment Finding by proving greenhouse gases are not harmful. However, the Finding relied on a large body of scientific, peer-reviewed research. Since the finding, the scientific community has become even more confident: manmade greenhouse gas emissions are indeed a threat to public health. So that seems like a tough road to take.

The second option would be for Congress to change the underlying law by amending the Clean Air Act. This law has not been amended since 1990. A majority of the House and at least 60 Senators would need to agree on exactly what that amendment would look like (non-budgetary legislation usually requires a supermajority vote in the Senate). **As a nonprofit that works closely with Congress, EESI can tell you that there is likely to be significant disagreement on this issue within the Congress!**

As the above two paths will likely prove difficult, the **EPA can develop a new and different plan for dealing with greenhouse gases as a threat to human health. That makes your continued commitment ever more critical, to help ensure that the new plan is as effective as it can possibly be!** □

RECENT EESI PUBLICATIONS

- Environmental Migrants: Considerations for the U.S. Government
- Biogas: Converting Waste to Energy
- The Consumer & Fuel Retailer Choice Act
- The U.S. Climate Alliance and Related Actions
- Energy Efficiency Standards for Appliances, Lighting and Equipment (2017)
- Plug-in Electric Vehicles (2017)
- Conservation Measures and the Farm Bill
- Jobs in Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency (2017)
- Addressing Water Quality through Nutrient Management

These publications can be found at:

www.eesi.org/pubs

An Internship Like No Other: A Semester at EESI

*EESI is proud to provide substantive internships to young energy and environmental leaders, helping to create career opportunities through hands-on participation in our work. Many interns have told us how their internships helped jumpstart their careers—or enabled them to make a career change. Below is **Emma Dietz**'s story, lightly edited for brevity.*

I ARRIVED IN WASHINGTON D.C. on January 18, 2017. It was two days before the inauguration of Mr. Trump, and I was anxious about being in the nation's capital, where the incoming administration held values that were contrary to much of what I believed, particularly when it came to environmental protection. Nonetheless, I was eager to get to my first day at the Environmental and Energy Study Institute. In truth, I had no idea what to expect.

I had been warned by my peers that as an intern in D.C., you often get stuck doing grunt work, and that interns feel readily replaceable in these competitive and coveted positions. At EESI, this could not be further from the truth.

From my first day, I was working on meaningful, relevant projects. I was eagerly welcomed aboard as a member of the team, and tasked with taking over the Congressional Record (updating the office on the relevant bills introduced and discussed by Congress the previous day) and managing the social media accounts. I was given a protocol on writing articles for EESI, and then quickly assigned a topic. By my second week, I had two web articles published.

Everyone at EESI is responsive and helpful; they seek opportunities to help you engage with their work, and as an intern, you very much feel like part of the team. What's more, the input I received on my work greatly helped me develop my skills as a writer and a critical thinker. By the end of my 11 weeks as an intern, I had 10 web articles published, contributed to two major fact sheets, and assisted with a host of other fascinating projects. Being given these opportunities as an intern is rare, and it's

one of the unique features of the EESI intern program that makes it so special.



Emma Dietz was a communications and policy intern at EESI during the Spring 2017 semester

As an EESI intern, no two days are the same—you are constantly engaging with new topics and broadening your horizons. I was immersed in policy issues ranging from revamping the energy grid, to improving public housing. I was encouraged to attend local events; some of my favorites included Congressional hearings (with titles such as “Make the EPA Great Again”), and talks by well-known sci-

entists on climate change, or the future of the low carbon economy. I was able to visit Congressional offices, help host briefings, and learn all about the processes that contribute to creating environmental policy.

There are three words that come to mind when I reflect on my experience as an intern at EESI: substantive, engaging, and transformative. Coming out of my internship, I not only have a plethora of new knowledge, but also tangible work to show for my time there. When it came to writing articles, I was often able to choose my own topics, which meant I was always working on a project that was engaging.

And finally, the experience as a whole was truly transformative on every level. **Living in D.C. at such a critical moment in history was exciting, and I saw how the work we were doing at EESI was more important than ever.** I learned the ins and outs of life in the Capital from the staff, and was inspired by their dedication to bettering our world. By the end of my internship, I had a new goal: to one day work as a legislator who can help enact the important changes that EESI is pushing for. Without a doubt, EESI provides an internship experience like no other! □

Show You Care About Resilient Solutions by Giving to EESI

IN THE AFTERMATH of a series of hurricanes bringing catastrophic rains and flooding, as well as deadly, destructive fires in the West and beyond, it is clear that we must redouble our efforts to push forward with resilient systems based on clean energy. **You have it in your power to combat the already visible signs of climate change.** You can be a part of that by giving to EESI, advancing our work to engage with Congress on resiliency, clean energy, and climate. You will feel great knowing that **you are helping to preserve and restore our planet and promoting a solution-focused economy.**

You can give the way that's right for you! Some of the easiest and quickest ways to give are online, through the mail, and through your workplace.

Donating online is as easy at

www.eesi.org/donate.

If you prefer, you can **mail your gift:**

1112 16th St. NW Suite 300

Washington DC 20036.

Many workplaces are making it easier for employees to contribute to sustainability efforts through paycheck-based giving. Check with your Human Resources Department to see if your employer offers workplace giving. If you are an employee or retiree of the



Credit: Kate Ausburn

military or federal government, you can designate donations to EESI with our **Combined Federal Campaign (CFC) number, #10627.**

With a gift of \$1,000 or more (or just \$84 a month!), you can become an **EESI Associate**. If you have the funds and a strong commitment to solutions, a gift of \$5,000, \$10,000 or more will enable you to **join our Director's Circle**. **You will experience many benefits when you join** (see www.eesi.org/circle for more information).

If you have a **Donor Advised Fund** or giving account, recommending a grant for EESI is now easier than ever. With the Donor Advised Fund widget, you can recommend a grant straight from EESI's website for many donor advised funds. Neither you nor EESI will incur any transaction fees.

When you give today, you make a long-lasting impact on the world by engaging with the policymaking community. **Stand up for what you believe by giving a gift to EESI today!**

If you have any questions or suggestions, please contact us at development@eesi.org or 202-662-1887. It's always a pleasure to connect with people like you who are making EESI's work possible! □

EESI Helping Rural Communities Become More Energy Efficient

DID YOU KNOW that in addition to our work on national energy and environmental policy, EESI is involved in projects that **directly help people do energy upgrades to their homes, without any upfront costs? Our goal is to assist families—especially low- and moderate-income families in rural areas that are struggling economically—reduce the amount of energy they use, cut their energy bills,** and improve the comfort of their homes. How can they do this without paying for the energy upgrades at the outset? A special kind of loan or tariff can help them afford the upgrades by enabling them to pay back the costs right on their energy bill—this is called “on-bill financing.” We are working with numerous rural electric cooperatives and small municipal utilities to help them bring these benefits to their customers! We're also helping these small utilities access low-interest and no-interest loan funds from the U.S. Department of Agriculture that help make these customer loans possible.

With your support, we have helped multiple on-bill financing projects get started, including one in the small community of Holland, Michigan, next to Lake Michigan. The community has cold winters, but below average energy efficiency. To address this, Holland implemented an energy plan, which included goals to improve housing energy efficiency in the small city. And **they were excited to find out that EESI could help them achieve their goals!**

As a result, Holland residents who have a history of good bill payment—even if they don't have great credit scores or high incomes—now have the opportunity to upgrade their homes with

the help of our local partners in the state of Michigan. We've just released a video that gives a quick overview of Holland's on-bill financing program—please check it out to learn more about what you're helping to make possible: www.eesi.org/obfvideo.

Across the country, we're helping several more on-bill financing projects launch—and we're responding to questions from small rural utilities about how on-bill financing can help them improve their customers' lives. **Each project helps create much needed jobs, such as local contractor jobs to help upgrade these homes.** Not only do projects like these provide community-wide benefits, but they also **ensure that we as a nation are progressing toward resilient and sustainable infrastructure in our towns and cities.** Thank you so much for helping make win-win solutions like on-bill financing possible with your ongoing support! □



Credit: City of Holland

You're Helping Protect U.S. Forests

THE 2018 FARM BILL, a must-pass federal law providing funding for a variety of rural and nutrition programs (including the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, formerly known as food stamps), is currently up for debate in Congress. The bill could help protect and enhance forested lands while providing opportunities for rural economic development. As a trusted source of credible, non-partisan information, EESI will use its time-tested approach to engage federal policymakers and key stakeholders on both the economic and environmental benefits of strong forest programs in the 2018 Farm Bill. Our goals include:

- **Shoring up understanding and support for the U.S. Forest Service budget** so that healthy forests receive appropriate federal funding, reflecting their many benefits to our nation. As a natural carbon sink and water filter, forests supply the nation with clean air and clean water.
- **Increasing policymaker understanding of the value of forest products** and their role in our nation's economic development, especially for rural communities. Nearly 1 million jobs in the United States can be attributed to forest products, and \$103 billion from forest tourism contributes to the economy. Rural communities rely on these sources of income. Revitalizing forests is a key way to improve struggling communities, opening up new, sustainable sources of income.

- **Promoting the economic and environmental benefits** of enhanced forestry management to help forests adapt to climate impacts and increased wildfires. This year has seen the costliest wildfire season on record. With a bill protecting and supporting forests, the effects of wildfires, as well as other threats like invasive species, would not be as financially burdensome.

With your renewed support, EESI plans to host a briefing discussing these benefits and create fact sheets to better illustrate to policymakers the impact this bill could have on rural communities and the nation as a whole. Additionally, EESI will continue to send out our well-regarded *Sustainable Bioenergy, Farms, and Forests* (SBFF) weekly newsletter to keep subscribers across the country in the know.

A **robust Farm Bill**, which provides both necessary funding and policy directives, will be an important vehicle for preserving forested land and, therefore, will **benefit rural America and our nation's forests**. Stay tuned for EESI's other work to promote sustainability in the Farm Bill. □

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The Environmental and Energy Study Institute is an independent, non-profit organization founded in 1984 by a bipartisan Congressional caucus dedicated to finding innovative environmental and energy solutions. You are needed now more than ever—**show your commitment with a tax-deductible gift today** and feel good knowing that EESI has again achieved the highest rating (Four Stars) from Charity Navigator and been named a Top-Rated Nonprofit by GreatNonprofits! **Please visit www.eesi.org to make a secure, online donation, or use the enclosed envelope. Thank you for your support!**



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