



# The League of Women Voters of Delaware

## Delaware needs Renewable Energy Programs that can drastically cut our carbon emissions by 2035.

Based on a recent study<sup>1</sup> scientists have concluded that worldwide emissions of greenhouse gases must be ratcheted back by 45 percent in less than 12 years<sup>2</sup> to avoid some of the worst effects of climate change. The LWVUS supports a goal of ending use of fossil fuel energy by 2035.<sup>3</sup>

Delaware is not on course to meet this goal. Currently, we limit the amount of greenhouse gases emitted by major energy suppliers by participating in the Renewable Portfolio Standards (RPS) program and the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI). We also have programs to encourage homeowners and business to install solar panels and to decrease energy use through energy efficiency programs. These programs have been effective, but the total reductions are far short of what will be required to limit global warming to 1.5 C. Furthermore, the RPS is currently frozen and cannot further increase the amount of renewable energy.

We also need more programs to reduce emissions from transportation, which currently represent about 43 percent of our greenhouse gas emissions. A top priority is increasing energy efficiency. The Sustainable Energy Utility can provide grants and low-interest loans for this using funds brought in by RGGI. What is needed is education to make sure that businesses, non-profits and individuals understand when and how to access this funding.

An immediate effort is also needed to remove the cost cap freeze on the RPS. One step in doing this is ensuring that the cost of producing energy with the Bloom Energy fuel cells (Bloom Boxes) is not counted as a cost of renewable energy when they are fueled by fossil fuels. Legislation addressing this issue is being written. Other issues involved in the freeze will likely be addressed by a combination of legal appeals and new legislation. We support all legitimate efforts to solve this problem.

Delaware's efforts to reduce greenhouse gases (GHG) from transportation sources have largely involved encouraging use of electric vehicles. When energy for such vehicles is obtained from fossil fuels, there is a small reduction in total GHG emissions and a large reduction in air contaminants in urban areas. Major reductions in GHGs will require electricity from renewable sources such as solar and wind.

Charging stations equipped with solar panels and storage batteries are a modest step in this direction. Delaware needs to accelerate its investigation of offshore wind farms as a part of an East Coast chain, while ensuring that such installations will provide maximum protection for birds and aquatic species.

Getting to the necessary level of GHG reductions will require steady pressure and flexibility in our approaches. Some legislators still need to recognize the risks climate change is placing on their constituents. Others need to be aware of advances in renewable energy and storage. We should always emphasize that numerous studies have shown that renewable energy creates far more jobs than use of fossil fuels and that renewable energy production becomes cheaper than natural gas as volume increases.

The price of lithium ion storage batteries has decreased 8 percent annually since 2010.<sup>4</sup> The cost of combining solar panels and storage is already providing some augmentation of base-load supply.<sup>5</sup>

With persistent attention to energy efficiency and adoption of new technologies for production of renewable energy, Delaware can do its part in averting an existential global crisis.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.ipcc.ch/sr15/chapter/summary-for-policy-makers/>

<sup>2</sup> See news reports such as <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2018/oct/08/global-warming-must-not-exceed-15c-warns-landmark-un-report>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.lwv.org/environment/league-joins-over-600-organizations-urging-support-bold-climate-action>

<sup>4</sup> See, for instance <https://www.targray.com/articles/energy-storage-systems-technology-trends>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.seia.org/initiatives/solar-plus-storage>