

Interfaith Environmental Network Public Policy Team Issues and Strategies

Our Public Policy Team has recently learned that the City Council of Austin will soon be considering future electric generation plans regarding the development of more renewable energy sources for Austin Energy. In response to the environmental impacts that are at stake in these plans for Austin Energy, our Public Policy Team has submitted the following recommendations to our IEN members and congregations in hopes that we will raise our voices in speaking to this issue with the City Council of Austin:

Out of our faith convictions to care for the well-being of our planet and as a moral issue regarding the energy policies adopted by our city's public utility company to serve the common good of our community in a global context, we recommend that the Interfaith Environmental Network of Austin enlist the support of our members and congregations to endorse the following policy positions as our municipal government seeks to make decisions about future energy production issues:

- 1. We urge the Austin City Council to adopt policies that move Austin Energy to develop more renewable energy sources as soon as possible. At a minimum, this would mean adopting the plan recommended by the Austin Generation Resource Planning Task Force, the Electric Utility Commission, and the Resource Management Commission.¹ We also call on the Austin City Council to order Austin Energy to undertake an immediate cost feasibility study to determine the possibility of accelerating the shift from coal produced electricity to clean energy sources at the earliest possible date.**
- 2. We urge the Austin City Council to adopt policies to mitigate the impact of future utility rate increases on low income rate payers through conservation measures and subsidies.**
- 3. We urge the Austin City Council to consider, not only the economics of moving toward more renewable energy sources, but also the impact of this decision will have beyond the City of Austin, taking into account the health impacts of coal strip mining and coal energy production, the**

¹ A good summary of the future energy generation plans that have been developed recently by various entities, along with recommendations to the Austin City Council, can be found in a recent issue of the Austin Chronicle via the following link:

<http://www.austinchronicle.com/gyrobase/Issue/story?oid=oid%3A912868>

projected carbon emissions impact on global ecosystems and climate change, and the projected impact of extreme weather patterns on the world's poor who live in coastal communities or who rely on subsistence farming.

Our Public Policy Team has also developed a number of strategies that we are exploring to encourage our IEN membership and supporting congregations to consider in our efforts to speak to this issue:

- To enlist individual IEN members and congregations to take action by expressing our support for the above policy recommendations with members of the Austin City Council.
- To invite our IEN members to address this issue with the governing bodies or leadership of our faith communities and ask for their support of the above policy recommendations with the Austin City Council.
- To establish an on-line petition regarding this issue before the City Council of Austin and to enlist support for our IEN policy recommendations within the Austin community.
- To provide our IEN membership and congregations in Austin with a IEN webpage Summary Fact Page on the various energy generation recommendations being proposed to the Austin City Council, and the environmental and financial implications of these various proposals.
- To research the needs for and resources currently available to low-income families for utility assistance through the Plus One program of Austin Energy.
- To ask our Public Policy Team to write an editorial page submission for the Austin American-Statesman newspaper and other news outlets.
- To invite our Public Policy Team members to schedule small group conversations with the Austin City Council members about our concerns and to encourage their support for our policy recommendations.