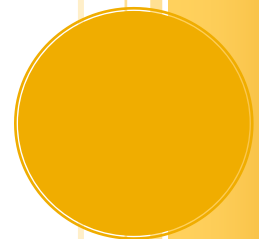


RHODE ISLAND ENERGY JUSTICE SNAPSHOT



National Association for the Advancement of Colored People,
Environmental and Climate Justice Program



RHODE ISLAND ENERGY JUSTICE

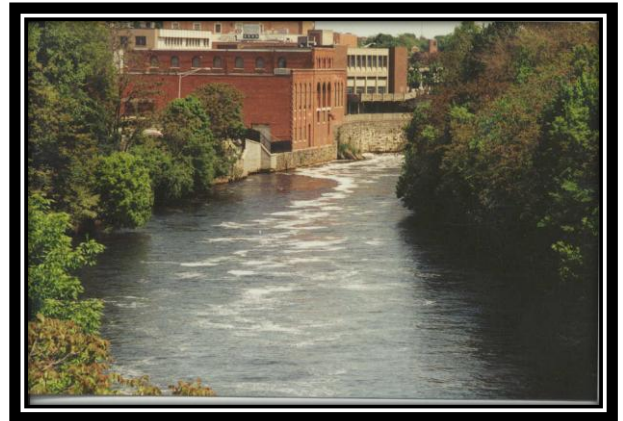
SNAPSHOT

SUMMARY

Access to clean energy is not just an environmental issue, but also a civil right. Communities of color bear a disproportionate share of the burdens of a fossil fuel based energy economy. This is why the NAACP Environmental and Climate Justice Program stands for just energy policies that will help protect our communities from harmful energy production processes and provide equitable access to the clean energy economy.

This Snapshot profiles Rhode Island's energy portfolio, evaluates key state energy policies, documents state utility disconnection policies, and outlines opportunities in the clean energy economy. Rhode Island is a state dominated by natural gas. The majority of the citizens use fuel oil as their primary energy source for home heating in the cold winter month, which has made Rhode Island vulnerable to fuel oil shortages. Rhode Island is one of the smallest consumers of energy per capita, but because of its reliance on imported energy, the state has some of the highest energy bills in the country. However, the state continues to capitalize from its offshore wind potential.

With this in mind, it is critically important that NAACP leaders actively engage in these debates to ensure that the community's needs motivate just energy policies. This snapshot provides information that will inform NAACP members on avenues for engagement.



ENERGY PORTFOLIO¹

At 95 percent of net generation, natural gas dominates Rhode Island net electricity generation. The state does not have any natural gas reserves, nor does it produce natural gas. The gas is supplied almost entirely by a pipeline from Connecticut.

Rhode Island is one of the only two state in the U.S. without coal-fired electricity generation. Like most of the New England states, Rhode Island is a part of the six-

state Independent System Operator-New England (ISO-NE) Regional Grid which receives some of its power from coal during peak times. Despite not having any coal mines, The City of Providence remains one of the leading coal import centers. The Port of Providence is also a key petroleum hub for New England.

Although natural gas fueled the majority of the net electricity generation, most of the remainder of the energy comes from biomass. The state's largest renewable energy generator is a 30MW biomass power plant that uses methane from a landfill in Providence. This energy accounts for almost 4 percent of the electricity generation.

Due to an increase in tourism, Block Island experiences high electricity costs in the summertime. The island has become the home to the first offshore wind facility in the United States. By utilizing offshore wind, Rhode Island has the ability to meet at least 15 percent of its electricity needs.

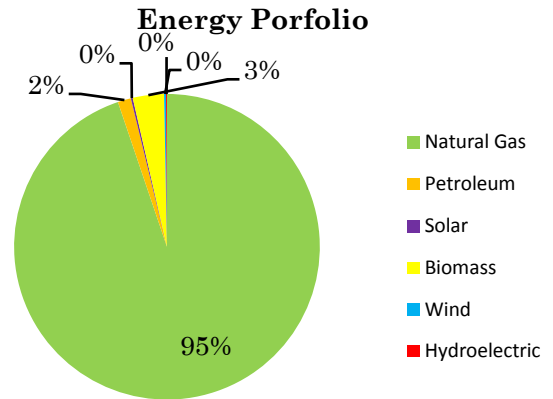


Figure 1. State Energy Consumption Profile

Renewable vs Non-Renewable Energy

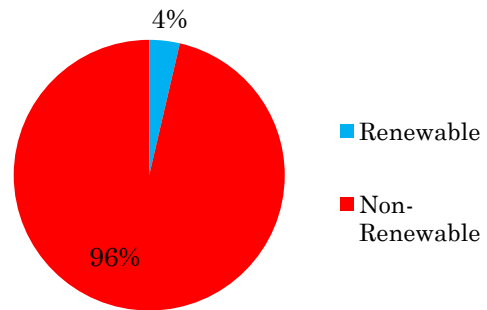


Figure 2. State Renewable vs. Non Renewable Energy consumption

Additional Resources

State Policy Opportunity Tracker

<http://spotforcleanenergy.org/state/rhode-island/>

Renewable Energy in Rhode Island

<http://www.acore.org/files/pdfs/states/RhodeIsland.pdf>

For more detailed information and data on Rhode Island's energy portfolio visit the U.S. Energy Information Administration's webpage, <https://www.eia.gov/state/?sid=RI>

Installed Renewable Energy Capacity, 2013

Solar PV	1.9 MW
Hydropower	3 MW
Biomass	26MW
Biodiesel	2 million gallons per year (mGy)
Wind power	9MW
Totals	40 MW; 2mGy

State Energy Policies

Policy Type	NAACP Recommended Policy Standards	Rhode Island Policy Details
Net Metering	<p>Net Metering Standards require utility companies to provide retail credit for new renewable energy produced by a consumer.</p> <p>Capacity Limit Recommendation: 2,000 kW (minimally), per system Mandatory/Voluntary: Mandatory</p>	Rhode Island has mandatory net metering standards with a statewide capacity limit of 3% of peak consumption, though it reserves 2,000 kW of capacity for feed-ins by systems under 50kW. The system capacity limit in the state is 5,000 kW.
Renewable Portfolio Standard (RPS)	<p>A RPS requires electric utility companies and other retail electric providers to supply a specific minimum among of customer load with electricity from eligible renewable energy sources.</p> <p>Recommended Standard: Minimally 25% renewable by 2025 Mandatory/Voluntary: Mandatory Allowable Sources: Wind, solar, geothermal, ocean/wave energy</p>	Rhode Island has a mandatory RPS with 14.5% renewable energy by 2019.
Energy Efficiency Resource Standard (EERS)	<p>A EERS establish a requirement for utility companies to meet annual and cumulative energy savings targets through a portfolio of energy efficiency program.</p> <p>Recommended Standard: Minimally 2% annual reduction of each previous year’s retail electricity sales. Mandatory/Voluntary: Mandatory</p>	Rhode Island has mandatory energy efficiency standards that vary by utility.
Local Hire Provision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extra renewable energy credit multipliers for in-state installation and in-state manufactured content • Renewable energy credits for utility providing incentives to build a plant in-state • Renewable energy credit for utility that makes an investment in a plate located in-state • Quota for government assisted construction project employers to hire a percentage of workers locally • Bidding Preferences for companies that hire a percentage of their employees in-state for state-funded public works projects and service contracts 	The city of Providence has a Local Hire provision. Providence has a First Source Program designed to recruit, screen, and refer businesses to a pool of qualified, local job seekers so that Providence residents can gain access to employment opportunities.
Disadvantaged Business Enterprise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide training opportunities • Notify DBEs of state business opportunities • Set-aside funds for DBEs 	Rhode Island certifies MBEs through the Minority Business Enterprise Compliance Office, which targets MBEs for all procurement and construction and awards MBEs 10% of all dollar value.

Utility Disconnection Policies



Access to energy is not a luxury, it's a necessity. With exposure to both extreme heat and extreme cold, folks should not be forced to choose between paying for medications or their energy bill. Public officials have implemented some policies that protect consumers from the life-threatening practice of utility disconnection (As outlined to the left). However, energy justice advocates must continue to hold utility companies and regulators accountable to human rights and basic but life-saving protections.

*More disconnection policy details are available at the **Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program State Disconnection Policies** webpage: <https://liheapch.acf.hhs.gov/Disconnect/disconnect.htm>*

Action steps: Meet with the Public Utilities Commission or your local utility company to advocate for the adoption of the following:

- Temperature based protections
- Restriction on reconnection and disconnection fees
- Stronger limitations on disconnections during specific periods
- Expanded protection for vulnerable populations

Notice	Written notice must be provided at least 10 days before a scheduled disconnection. The notice may be posted, or mailed and posted.
Date Based Protection	Yes. November 1–April 15 no disconnections for primary heating accounts with arrearages of less than \$500, or other accounts with arrearages of less than \$200. No disconnections for a protected status customer. Utility may not terminate any customer without filing an affidavit with the Division of Public Utilities and Carriers at least forty-eight hours before the scheduled disconnection.
Temperature Based Protection	Yes. No disconnections on days when there is a heat advisory or excessive heat warning in effect.
Payment Plan	Yes. Available to all customers at any time. Payment plan levels the amount paid over a ten or twelve-month period into equal installments. Different payment plans are available for protected status customers, low-income customers, and all other customers.
Reconnection Fee	Yes
Disconnection Limitations	No disconnections on Fridays, weekends, legal holidays, days before legal holidays, or when the utility is not open to the public for regular business.
Other Protections	Permission of the Division of Public Utilities and Carriers is needed before a utility may disconnect a household where any member has a disability or where all adult members are 62 years or older. No disconnection when a child younger than 2 resides in the house and the customer was not previously disconnected before the birth of the child.
<i>Utility shut-offs have a disproportionate impact on low-income and African American communities. Check out the NAACP report, "Lights Out in the Cold" for more information.</i>	

Hot Energy Topics

H-8354A/ S2450B: Governor Raimondo signed H-8354A/ S2450B into law. The bill extends the Renewable Energy Fund from 2017-2027, which provides grants to reduce the up-front cost of renewable energy projects. Additionally, the bill expands virtual net metering. Now residential customers and qualified low and moderate housing developments qualify for “Community Remote Net Metering”. Renewable energy resources used in residential systems or employed by a manufacturer are now exempt from property tax.²

DEVELOPING THE BLACK-GREEN PIPELINE

The NAACP Black-Green Pipeline Initiative promotes the equitable inclusion of communities of color into the green economy to address unemployment in our communities and to increase the voices and influence of our communities in the green economy.

Overall, African Americans and Latinos suffer from higher unemployment and poverty rates. According to the 2015 Bureau of Labor Statistics, the national rate of unemployment for African Americans was 9.6 percent. In Rhode Island, the average for unemployed African Americans is 12.2 percent.³ Expanding green training and jobs to include communities of color can begin to close the disparities in poverty and unemployment. African Americans are inadequately represented in the clean energy sector. The green economy offers an opportunity for communities of color to join a career-level field with opportunities

for upward mobility. The green job field is diverse with 45 percent of all green jobs in the United States being held by workers with a high school diploma or less. It is the goal of the Black-Green Pipeline Initiative that African Americans will have increased representation across all sectors of the clean energy economy.

To subscribe to the Black-Green Pipeline Initiative Weekly Digest send a blank email to:

naacp-bgp-subscribe@yahogroups.com

The Green Labor Market and Communities of Color

Rhode Island has an average concentration of energy employment with 5,885 traditional energy workers statewide. This percentage accounts for 1.3 percent of total state employment, which is well below the 2.4 percent national employment average. However, Rhode Island has an additional 10,606 jobs in Energy Efficiency, which accounts for 0.5 percent of all energy efficiency jobs nationwide.⁴

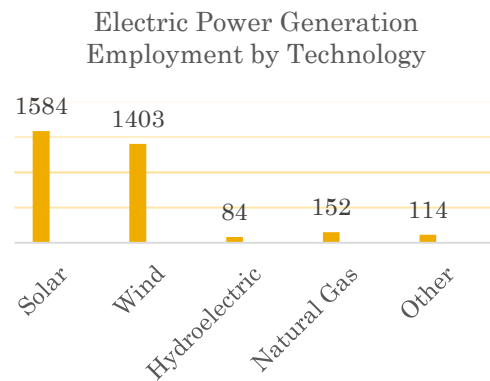


Figure 3. Electric Generation Employment in Pennsylvania

In Rhode Island, the electric power generation segment employs 3,337 workers with solar making up the largest

segment with 1,584 jobs, followed by wind generation with 1,403 jobs. In 2015, the Solar Foundation reported that thirty-three states, including D.C. saw a positive growth in solar jobs. Rhode Island was one of the top three states in solar job growth.⁵

In 2016, the Solar Energy Industries Association (SEIA) reported that recent solar capacity additions in the United States have been predominately commercial and utility-scale projects. However, in 2016 over half of the nation's solar workers were at work on residential solar projects. This imbalance is attributed to the fact that utility-scale generation typically produces more megawatts per labor unit installed compared to distributed generation.⁶

Solar Workers by Project Scale

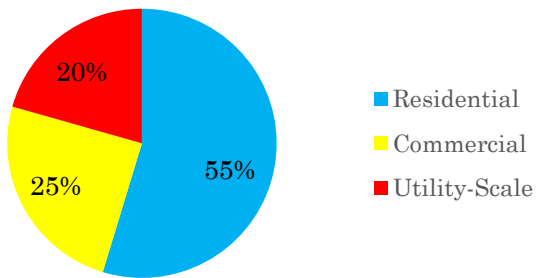


Figure 4.. Source: Solar Energy Industries Association



Figure 5. Wind energy projects and manufacturing facilities in Rhode Island

Source: American Wind Energy Association

Figure 5, pictured above, shows the online wind projects and the gears represent the manufacturing facilities in Maine. Investing in wind adds jobs in operations, maintenance, construction, manufacturing and support sectors. In 2016, the wind industry added 1,000 to 2,000 direct and indirect jobs to the energy job sector.⁷

TAKE ACTION

Host a Bridging the Gap: Connecting Black Communities to the Green Economy Roundtable

- The NAACP ECJ Program is committed to advancing a meaningful dialogue and concerted action on engagement of communities of color in the green economy.
- To start taking action, organize a multi-stakeholder roundtable with socially responsible energy business leaders, historically black colleges and universities, environmental groups, civil rights organizations, labor unions, and others to discuss developing and implementing a strategy to ensure that policies/laws/regulation, research initiatives, community level practices, corporate social responsibility measures, etc. are in place to ensure greater engagement of communities of color in the green economy.

Implement a demonstration project such as a community solar garden or rooftop solar project

- Interested in taking a direct role in implementing clean energy practices in your community? Install rooftop solar or community solar.
- There are several rebates and incentives available to Nevadans interested in pursuing renewable energy projects. Visit energy.gov for a list of renewable energy incentive program available on the state and federal levels.
- You can also check out funding opportunities offered through the Department of Energy SunShot Initiative, which aims to support solar energy adoption by making solar energy accessible to all Americans.

Launch a Just Energy Policies Campaign

- Identify one or more of the focal policies outlined in this snapshot and documented more extensively in the Just Energy Policies to champion.
- Build a coalition with likeminded energy justice advocates and other local and state allies to build power and momentum.
- Host a town-hall to educate the community about the policy and get input from members on their needs, priorities, and perspectives.
- Launch an intentional campaign to advocating that Alaska adopts the recommended policy standard.
- Set up lobby trainings and coordinate a lobby-day with elected officials.

Make public the NAACP energy justice platform and engage the public through media

- Develop and place an op-ed by NAACP Unit President or ECJ Chair in a local newspaper
- Participate in a radio interview, TV interview, podcast
- Be quoted in a local newspaper
- Post an article or blog to an online platform

CLOSING

With the repeal of several federal environmental laws, it has become imperative to make a just transition to clean renewable energy. States like Rhode Island have become leaders in energy transition and demonstrate that our energy systems can be both clean and just.

Embracing a transition to clean renewable energy sources will not only provide significant environmental and health benefits for Rhode Island but will also diversify and strengthen the state's renewable energy economy. NAACP just energy leaders should advocate on behalf of a strong Renewable Portfolio Standard, Energy Efficiency Resource Standard, and Net Metering standards. In addition, Rhode Island should ensure that policies are in place to ensure equity in energy enterprise such as local hire provisions and disadvantaged business enterprises.

Although there is a little debate as to whether or not Rhode Island should transition to a clean energy economy, the path to 100% renewable is still being paved. Rhode Island has made some major strides in renewable energy generation, the state still faces decisions that will determine how and if it can meet this goal. At stake is the fundamental questions of whether power should be generated from the top-down or bottom-up. Will customers be able to seize control of energy generation through distributed power generation or will utility companies maintain a monopoly that prevents the equitable distribution of power, ownership, and economic rewards of the electricity system?



July 2017

Created by the NAACP Environmental and Climate Justice Program

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¹ "U.S. Energy Information Administration - EIA - Independent Statistics and Analysis." Rhode Island - State Energy Profile Overview - U.S. Energy Information Administration (EIA). June 15, 2017.

² "Rhode Island S2450 | 2016 | Regular Session." LegiScan. <https://legiscan.com/RI/bill/S2450/2016>

³ "Unemployment rates for African Americans by state in 2015 : The Economics Daily." U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. March 04, 2016. <https://www.bls.gov/opub/ted/2016/unemployment-rates-for-african-americans-by-state-in-2015.htm>.

⁴ The U.S. Energy Employment Report (2017) U.S. Energy Information Administration, November 2016 Monthly Energy Review. https://www.energy.gov/sites/prod/files/2017/01/f34/us_energy_jobs_2017_final.pdf

⁵ *The Solar Foundation's National Solar Jobs Census 2015*. Publication. The Solar Foundation. 2016. 1-65.

⁶ "Solar Market Insight Report 2016 Year In Review." Solar Energy Industries Association. 2016. <http://www.seia.org/research-resources/solar-market-insight-report-2016-year-review>.

⁷ "State Fact Sheets." AWEA - American Wind Energy Association. 2017. <http://www.awea.org/state-fact-sheets>.