



Letter To Governor Pritzker From The Illinois Clean Jobs Coalition

August 2 2021 5:06 PM



SPRINGFIELD - The Illinois Clean Jobs Coalition wrote to Gov. Pritzker and the General Assembly today about the status of the energy negotiations and ICJC's efforts to pass a climate and equitable jobs bill. Their letter is below:

August 2, 2021

To: Illinois General Assembly
House Speaker Emanuel Chris Welch
Senate President Don Harmon
Governor JB Pritzker

To Members of the Illinois General Assembly and Governor Pritzker:

We write to regretfully inform you that negotiations between the Illinois Clean Jobs Coalition (ICJC) and Climate Jobs Illinois (CJI) around passing a climate and equitable jobs bill in Illinois have reached an impasse. CJI's insistence on allowing all coal and

gas plants to stay open and pollute forever is something our communities and climate cannot afford or survive. Further, CJI continues to seek full domain over new and emerging clean energy jobs, and to shut the door on opportunities for Black and Brown contractors to stake their claim in the new energy economy.

The cost of doing nothing is colossal. Thousands of union workers and solar installers are about to lose their jobs, as could teachers and first responders whose salaries are paid with property taxes dependent on the local energy sector. The impact on our climate and public health will worsen. Black and Brown communities will continue to be shut out of the clean energy economy while they disproportionately suffer the impact of pollution. Big utility companies will remain unchecked, raising rates and racking up profits while consumers foot the bill.

And, President Biden will be unable to meet his administration's goals to contain the climate emergency we find ourselves in if the state's biggest polluter - the Prairie State coal plant, which accounts for 28% of Illinois carbon emissions and is the 7th worst polluter in the country - remains open indefinitely.

For the past three years, the Illinois Clean Jobs Coalition has focused on building a statewide effort to pass nation-leading legislation that positions Illinois to do its part to tackle climate change, and to center equity and justice at the heart of our state's energy future. We almost reached that point this May, and again in June, until the fossil fuel industry threatened immediate layoffs at planned new gas plants and the Senate delayed action on that bill at the last minute.

Since June, the Illinois Clean Jobs Coalition has been willing and eager to work with CJI on finding a path forward on a nation-leading climate bill. In June, the Illinois Clean Jobs Coalition received a proposal from labor that was a step backward. CJI's proposal created unlimited carbon emission loopholes, allowing any polluting fossil fuel plant to stay open in the state as long as it wanted, and completely exempting gas plants from any pollution reductions for the next two decades. Further, CJI's proposal would require small Black and Brown renewable energy contractors to jump through major hoops in a new state bureaucracy just to participate in the state's renewable energy programs. In reviewing these proposals with existing Black and Brown contractors, they believe these restrictions would put them out of business, and instead stake labor's claim on small renewable energy projects that union contractors historically have not been interested in building.

ICJC has been assured by CJI nearly daily since June that they were working on an alternate decarbonization proposal to find common ground and to achieve some possible alignment. That proposal never appeared, and now appears it is not forthcoming.

The Illinois Clean Jobs Coalition continues to stress that the path to an agreed climate and equitable jobs bill must include real action on pollution reductions in the coming decade in order to avoid the catastrophic impacts of climate change, and ensure that communities of color are able to create wealth and equity in a clean energy future. We have expressed openness on how to get there, but we cannot sacrifice those principles.

To achieve a carbon-free power sector in Illinois, we have proposed a number of options, including the following:

- While we originally proposed achieving a carbon-free power sector by 2030, we agreed to shift those targets to the framework supported by the Governor and Senate President, which would be 2035 for coal plants and 2045 for gas plants, with interim targets so that we aren't delaying action on climate for 20 years.
- We agreed to a proposal to allow the Prairie State Energy Campus and Springfield CWLP's Dallman station to stay open until 2045 if they can achieve 90% carbon-capture by 2035.
- To address the concerns of the Senate President about immediate job impacts to gas plants under construction, we have expressed openness to prioritizing pollution reduction from power plants that impact environmental justice communities first, while allowing newer gas plants a longer time frame before they have to begin pollution reductions. This would allow those gas plants to get built.

On labor standards, the Illinois Clean Jobs Coalition has agreed to Climate Jobs Illinois' proposed requirements that would apply to 96% of new renewable energy projects - up from 0% today - but seeks to create at least a viable pathway for new Black and Brown businesses seeking renewable energy contracts. We have proposed a number of options, including:

- Creating a prevailing wage carve-out for new Black and Brown businesses for a period of time to allow them to grow to the point where they can be union signatories. This was included in the bill in May.
- Allowing projects under a certain size - a size that labor historically has not and would not work on - to move forward without being subject to labor union standards, which has been done in every other state that has passed ambitious renewable energy policy. Page 3 of 3
- Allowing projects of certain types, such as small businesses, community centers, and churches, not to be subject to prevailing wage standards.
- Allowing projects built by businesses under a certain size to be able to work on projects and not be subject to the same labor union standards as large contractors.
- Allow clean energy developers to pay wages that are commensurate with the experience and training required to install solar panels, and not the \$82/hour wage of a journeyman electrician that labor is demanding.

- Requiring additional efforts on the part of labor unions to diversify their workforce in the near-term.

When Climate Jobs Illinois was formed nine months ago, its top priority was saving Exelon's nuclear plants; this was the sole focus of their late May rally at the Capitol. The Illinois Clean Jobs Coalition saw potential for alignment around a nation-leading equitable climate bill in their intention to build significant amounts of renewable energy and create a just transition for fossil fuel workers and communities.

The potential for alignment still exists, but it cannot be achieved by putting the interests of large, multi-billion dollar fossil fuel interests first or shutting out communities of color from a clean energy economy.

We remain willing to roll up our sleeves to get this climate and equitable jobs bill done.