

Background on Clean Energy Standard Legislation (S2978/A4658) *For EmpowerNJ Activists & Volunteers*

Basics about the Bill (for your personal background):

- Introduced in August & September 2022 by Senator Bob Smith & Assemblyman Robert Karabinchak.
- Seeks to revise renewable energy portfolio standards and implement a clean energy standard. Facilities considered “renewable” and “clean” by these standards will receive ratepayer subsidies.
- Governor Murphy and legislative leaders have cited this bill as a priority for the post-election “lame duck” session, running from November 20 until January 9, 2024.
- Originally envisioned as a way to scale up wind & solar, but the devil is in the details, and lots of dirty energy developments could qualify for subsidies under the current definition of “clean” energy in the bill.
- One version of the bill sets the definition of “clean energy standard” as any power generating facility that “results in no net increase in greenhouse gas emissions”. That’s too weak – it does not account for other co-pollutants like Nitrogen Oxides (NOx), particulate matter, carbon monoxide, formaldehyde, ammonia (NH₃), among other health harming emissions from combustion of methane and other fuels. And net zero in itself is a way to keep emitting greenhouse gasses while promising they’re being offset somewhere else!
- We are fighting for a standard that states that any new electricity generating facilities must not produce any emissions of GHG’s or co-pollutants at the point of generation or storage of the electric energy, and explicitly that incinerators, also known as “resource recovery facilities”, do not qualify as “clean energy”.
- This means we’re fighting against trash incinerators, mis-named “renewable” natural gas, hydrogen facilities, and carbon capture and sequestration.
- If we can get the legislature to amend S2978/A4658 to exclude subsidies for dirty energy development, we support it!
- If we can’t win the necessary amendments, we need to oppose the bill and stop it during the “lame duck” session, in order to get something better in 2024 during the new legislative session.