



Tough Questions Guide: Clean Energy States Alliance

For use with less-receptive audiences

How to Use This Guide

- Lead with messaging related to fiscal responsibility, energy independence, and economic competitiveness.
- Avoid ideological framing; focus on outcomes and optionality.
- Acknowledge valid concerns directly. Don't sidestep.
- Emphasize state control, flexibility, and accountability.
- When possible, connect to local jobs, businesses, and ratepayers.
- Integrate specific examples relevant to the community or jurisdiction. For example, if speaking with elected officials that represent a particular area, come with specific, relevant examples of local support, local contracting, local benefits.

[ECONOMICS]

Q: Isn't clean energy more expensive? Energy costs are already high; we can't make it more expensive.

A: That concern is exactly why these investments are happening. The goal is to bring costs down and make them more predictable over time. In many cases today, newer energy sources are among the lowest-cost options to build and operate, especially because they don't rely on fuel that can spike in price. The bigger cost driver right now is volatility: fuel prices, aging infrastructure, and rising demand.

*Key point: This is about reducing long-term costs and avoiding price spikes—not adding to them.

Q: Our state started pushing renewables and now our electricity rates are sky high. Doesn't that mean renewables cost more?

A: Electricity rates are influenced by a lot of factors, including fuel prices, transmission upgrades, storm recovery costs, and rising demand, not just the type of generation.

In many cases, rate increases are tied to:

- Natural gas price swings
- Grid upgrades that would be needed regardless
- Catching up on underinvestment in infrastructure

Adding more low-cost energy sources can actually help stabilize and put downward pressure on prices over time.

*Key point: The issue isn't adding new energy sources—it's making sure we have enough affordable supply to meet demand.

Q: Why not just lower bills instead of subsidizing clean energy?

A: Lowering bills is the goal, but you get there by reducing the cost of producing and delivering energy.

These investments help:

- Lower the cost to generate power
- Reduce reliance on volatile fuel markets
- Cut operating costs for homes, businesses, and public facilities

*Key point: We have an opportunity to lower utility bills by investing in cheaper, more efficient ways to produce energy.

[RELIABILITY]

Q: The sun doesn't always shine and the wind doesn't always blow. Won't that make the electricity system less reliable?

A: Reliability is non-negotiable. No system depends on a single source of energy, and this one doesn't either. The grid already balances different energy sources every day. What's changing is that we're adding more tools to strengthen reliability and continuity of the electricity system, like:

- Energy storage
- Grid modernization
- A more diverse mix of energy sources

*Key point: A more diversified system is generally more reliable, not less.

Q: Isn't it safer and more efficient to focus on adding baseload energy resources (e.g., nuclear, natural gas) that are available 24/7?

A: We need reliable, around-the-clock power, but we also need flexibility and enough total supply to meet rising demand. Different resources serve different roles:

- Some provide steady, always-on power
- Others provide flexible, lower-cost energy when available

*Key point: Reliability comes from a balanced system—not relying on any single type of resource.

Q: Why should we move to technologies that are unproven and not ready at scale?

A: Most of the technologies being deployed today are already widely used and proven at scale. At the same time, we're continuing to invest in next-generation technologies carefully - through pilots and phased deployment - to make sure they're ready before scaling further.

*Key point: This is about scaling what already works while responsibly testing what comes next.

[LAND USE & ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS]

Q: Don't renewables take up too much land compared to traditional power plants?

A: Land use is an important consideration for any energy source. Many projects are designed to:

- Use previously developed or low-impact land
- Co-exist with agriculture (e.g., dual-use solar)
- Be distributed rather than concentrated in one location

*Key point: The goal is to meet energy needs while using land as efficiently and responsibly as possible. In many cases solar is one of the least disruptive forms and provides stable, long-term income for farmers and rural communities.

Q: Isn't turning farmland and forests into industrial sites for solar and wind the opposite of environmental protection?

A: Siting decisions matter, and they're taken seriously. Projects go through review processes to:

- Avoid high-value land where possible
- Minimize disruption
- Ensure local input

In many cases, landowners choose to invest in clean energy options because it can provide a stable revenue stream while keeping land in productive use. Additionally, siting decisions are typically made locally by landowners, county commissions, and zoning boards, which allows communities to shape development in ways that reflect local priorities.

*Key point: These projects are planned carefully to balance energy needs with land conservation and local priorities.

Q: Don't wind turbines kill birds?

A: All forms of energy infrastructure have some environmental impact, including traditional power plants and transmission lines.

Wind projects are required to:

- Follow wildlife protection guidelines
- Use siting and design strategies to minimize impact

Key point: The focus is on reducing impacts across all energy sources while meeting energy needs.

Q: Natural gas is cleaner than coal, right? Why not use that?

A: Natural gas has played, and continues to play, an important role in the energy system. At the same time, relying too heavily on any single fuel can:

- Expose consumers to price volatility
- Create supply constraints

*Key point: A balanced approach, using multiple energy sources, helps keep costs stable and the system reliable.

[FAIRNESS]

Q: Why should other ratepayers subsidize energy upgrades for low-income households? Why should I pay for someone else's improvements?

A: This is about making the overall system more efficient and less costly for everyone.

When energy use is more efficient:

- Total system demand goes down
- Pressure on the grid is reduced
- Costs are lower across the board

It also helps avoid more expensive infrastructure upgrades that all ratepayers would otherwise have to fund.

*Key point: Helping reduce the highest-cost energy use ultimately lowers costs for the entire system, not just individual households.

[Optional Bridging Phrases (for any tough exchange)]

- "At the end of the day, this is about keeping energy affordable and reliable."
- "The focus here is on practical outcomes people can see in their bills and their communities."
- "We're working to expand supply, stabilize costs, and avoid bigger expenses down the line."