

**COMMENTS OF THE ALLIANCE FOR AFFORDABLE ENERGY TO THE
LOUISIANA CLIMATE INITIATIVE TASK FORCE**

JULY 29, 2021

Good morning, my name is Jesse George. I am a lifelong resident of south Louisiana and a citizen of Cherokee Nation. I am speaking today on behalf of the Alliance for Affordable Energy, where I serve as New Orleans Policy Director. The Alliance is a nonprofit electric utility watchdog organization that advocates fair, affordable, environmentally-responsible energy policy for Louisiana,

Our circumstances are clear: Louisiana is particularly vulnerable to the symptoms of a dangerously warming climate, and we must act boldly and swiftly to reduce anthropogenic greenhouse gas emissions if we wish to preserve our land and way of life. We have no time for further hesitation or for false solutions. While the Alliance for Affordable Energy supports a considered and comprehensive approach to our climate crisis, the work of this task force must be based on sound data and evidence if we are to meet the goal of net zero emissions by year 2050.

The sources of greenhouse gas emissions in Louisiana are clear, and industry is the primary polluter. Industrial processes contribute 66% of our state's CO2 emissions. On a national scale, industrial processes account for just 17% of CO2 emissions, a stark contrast that highlights the outsized contribution of industry to Louisiana's carbon pollution. In fact, greenhouse gas emissions in Louisiana have risen between 8-10% since 2012, while during that same period, U.S. emissions declined by approximately 10%. Any plan to address climate change must emphasize the curtailing of industrial emissions as a primary feature. This means accounting for the greenhouse gas emissions of industrial facilities brought on-line since 2018 and those that are permitted but unconstructed, which will contribute an additional 125 million metric tons of CO2

equivalents annually above those accounted for in the greenhouse gas inventory as presented. Likewise, the inventory must account for emissions from our state's thousands of abandoned oil and gas wells and pipelines. Failing to do so will cause the task force to vastly underestimate the reductions necessary to meet our emissions goals. Reducing industrial emissions will also mean curtailing the permitting of new facilities. This will require a coordinated, multi-agency effort across state government, including the Louisiana Public Service Commission, the Department of Environmental Quality, and the Department of Natural Resources, among others.

I have heard a lot of discussion this morning about whether or not Louisiana can afford to refuse the permitting and construction of new industrial facilities. This task force should asking the opposite question: Can we afford to proceed as we have been? On a personal note, my folks in Lake Charles were just able to move back into their house three weeks ago after it was destroyed by Hurricane Laura last autumn. When I was a kid, hurricane season ran from June to October. Now, it runs from May to December. Are we going to wait until we have year-round hurricanes before we act? Can we afford this constant cycle of destruction?

Half-measures and false solutions, such as carbon capture and sequestration, will not bring about the reductions in emissions needed to reach net zero by 2050. Carbon capture and sequestration does not remove any carbon from the atmosphere. Rather, in the most optimistic scenario, it would prevent a minute fraction of the carbon emitted by industrial processes from being released. It has never been proven to work at scale or to securely store carbon over the long-term. Currently, the vast majority of captured carbon is used for forced injection oil recovery, which further exacerbates the climate crisis. In order for this technology to be economically feasible would require first the construction of pipelines equivalent to the mileage of existing oil and gas pipelines, pumping lethally concentrated and highly pressurized CO₂ gas

through communities around the country. We know from experience with oil and gas pipelines that the communities that bear the most risk when these projects are sited and constructed are low-income communities and communities of color.

Though residential activity contributes just 1% of our state's CO2 emissions, it is ordinary residents -- disproportionately black, brown, and indigenous -- who suffer the degradation of our land and waters by industry, for instance, in fenceline communities in Calcasieu Parish and the river parishes, where day by day, residents are poisoned in their own homes. Environmental racism of this kind is so insidious because it happens slowly and invisibly, and destroys not only individual human bodies, but beloved communities. For too long, our state has been used as a dumping ground -- in the form of fossil fuel drilling wastes and in the effluent and agricultural runoff that contributes to the annual hypoxic "Dead Zone" in the Gulf of Mexico. The state's climate planning must reject false solutions and prioritize the needs of poor communities and communities of color that have been treated as human sacrifices to industry.

Fortunately, the Louisiana workforce already possesses many of the skills necessary to lead the transition away from fossil fuels. Existing infrastructure devoted to servicing offshore oil and gas production can easily be converted to service offshore wind farms. While our circumstances are critical, we have an opportunity to maintain our position as a leader in energy production without the destructive extraction of the fossil fuel industry, but our climate planning must focus on proven solutions to reducing greenhouse gas emissions: energy efficiency, electrification supported by renewable energy, reliable public transportation, and a rapid abatement of oil and gas extraction.

The culture that Louisianans love so dearly -- everything from our cuisine to the ways we recreate -- is tied deeply to the health of the land and the waters. An honest evaluation of our

circumstances tells us that the preservation of our way of life for future generations is incompatible with further investment in fossil fuels and petrochemicals or with false solutions to climate change. The approach that brought us to our current predicament -- that of placing corporate profit over people and community, of viewing the Earth as a thing to be exploited -- will not provide a solution to the dire challenge we face. The creation of this task force represents an opportunity to begin the difficult but necessary work of reversing decades of ecological destruction, but it must be guided by commitments to honest accounting, economic and racial equity, indigenous sovereignty, and a radical change in our relationship with the land and waters.