

My name is Richard Cole and I live in Montgomery County. I'm a retired naval officer who worked aboard fleet ballistic missile submarines. Our mission was that of deterrence from nuclear attack on the United States. Over the years since then I've come to realize that humanity was facing another existential threat with a fast closing window to respond. And that is of course climate change. This began my activism.

It's very concerning that climate change has become politicized, caught up in the culture war, part of a supposed "woke" progressive agenda. The fossil fuel industry likes to say they provide energy security and the energy needed to drive economic expansion. But that has come with tremendous costs to society and our natural world. But the industry is far more concerned about the almighty dollar. And yet they continue to be subsidized, a few billion dollars of taxpayer money every year just in our state. Our government is in essence destroying our communities and ecosystems and helping fuel climate chaos.

Continuing to support any expansion in fossil fuels is to disregard the IPCC, inter-governmental panel on climate change, which has stated that in order to meet the goal of keeping below 1.5° C from pre-industrial levels as set forth in the Paris agreement there can be no new fossil fuel projects. This must stop.

We cannot waste resources on false solutions that simply allow the fossil fuel industry to continue business as usual, things like CCS and hydrogen, except in cases of hard-to-abate sectors like heavy industry. We must stop the flow of money into fossil fuels. Our state cannot bow to pressure from the far-right who see ESG, environmental, social, and governance as yet another tactic of "woke capitalism". Pension fund managers must be allowed, or better yet required to divest from portfolios that include fossil fuels.

We need to reduce our dependence on fossil fuels, phase out where we can and continue to bring renewable energy sources online as quickly as possible. We have to find ways to deal with what are called hard-to-abate emissions like those from industry such as steel, cement and shipping. Take concrete which is the second most used substance behind water and it's production generates 8-9 percent of total CO2. Fortunately, there are advances being made to reduce these sources of emissions. For instance, there are low carbon or carbon negative alternatives for cement and concrete that are being developed and deployed. Earlier this year NJ passed a bill that incentivizes contractors bidding for state infrastructure projects to use low embodied carbon concrete. Other states are passing similar buy clean legislation. It's these sorts of things we need to be doing right here in PA.

Article I, section 27 of Pennsylvania's constitution, aka the Green Amendment, states that "the people have a right to clean air, pure water and the preservation of the natural, scenic, historic and esthetic values of the environment. Pennsylvania's public natural resources are the common property of all the people, including generations, you have to come. As trustee of these resources, the Commonwealth show conserve and maintain them for the benefit of all people." It is by way of the green amendment that communities are able to hold officials accountable for harms that result from their action and government agencies need to ensure it is upheld in the decision making process where there may be a potential for harm. Case in point, an LNG facility being proposed by the Philadelphia LNG task force for the City of Chester. In a third and final hearing the task force was met with considerable, organized opposition. Hopefully this already overburdened community will prevail and put the project to rest. Officials also must not stand in the way of legislation that our citizens want and need just because just because the other party is advancing it. Case in point, the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI). The politicians that fought against

RGGI for unfounded reasons, putting its fate in the hands of the courts, should be ashamed of themselves. We've already lost millions of dollars that could have been used to help reduce pollution and improve health, add thousands of new clean energy jobs, lower energy bills and slash carbon emissions.

Our elected officials must serve the people they represent, not corporations who are motivated by profit. Climate change affects everyone regardless of political affiliation and most people are concerned. It's especially true for younger generations who see the mess that we're handing them. This past year has been the warmest on record and we have seen the results. Yet it may be the coolest and calmest in retrospect. The choices we make today can change the trajectory. We just need to act, together, boldly and without delay. We owe it to our children, for they deserve our very best efforts.