

Energy

The increasingly warm summers in the last few years have exposed Connecticut's current energy system for what it is: polluting, inefficient, too expensive and unresponsive to residents. First, as heat waves have struck Connecticut, Eversource has jacked up rates. Their greed was only stopped by the intervention of PURA. It's clear that necessities — like energy — shouldn't be provided by a profit-driven private actor. Second, tropical storms have left hundreds of thousands of residents without power. In response, Eversource has been remarkably inefficient and unresponsive to the desperate needs of residents. In the midst of economic precarity, even a few hours of response time can mean the difference between a week's worth of groceries spoiled or saved. This is just the latest example of how climate change cripples the viability of much of our existing infrastructure.

Even outside of these events, Connecticut's energy system is deeply flawed. The energy that powers our electric grid, heats our homes, and fuels our cars and buses remains [overwhelmingly dominated by fossil fuel](#). While the state has done a lot to clean its [electricity grid and improve air quality](#), this dependence keeps the state stuck in an unsustainable cycle of greenhouse gas emissions and high costs based on out of state natural gas and petroleum. **[Electricity prices](#) in Connecticut are among the top five highest in the United States, causing undue burden on low income residents.** And low income communities and communities of color face unequal distribution of both energy burdens in citing [polluting energy facilities](#) and energy opportunities in solar financing.

Connecticut is currently at an energy policy crossroads. For the past several of years, legislators have been knocking the wind out of the renewable energy economy by passing laws that [remove rate compensation to home-base solar](#), [raiding energy efficiency funds](#) that could save residents over \$275 million and installing an [unnecessary natural gas plant](#) in an economically distressed municipality despite community pushback and potential harm to the water supply.

Justin believes in taking a different tack. He knows that Connecticut's energy system has the potential to be democratically controlled, cleaner, generate thousands of good-paying jobs, and be more resilient to storms. As your State Representative, Justin will:

1. Pass Community Choice Aggregation (CCA) enabling legislation

- [CCAs](#) allow local governments to procure wholesale electricity for retail customers within their municipality on a combined basis, allowing for both improved rates and increased renewables. Under CCAs, customers in an area are automatically enrolled into

the program, with the option to actively opt out before the program begins or anytime thereafter.

- CCAs are a common sense first step, currently utilized by all neighboring states (NY, NJ, MA, RI). CCAs have been embraced to improve cost, grow renewable resources, and increase resiliency in states with a similar conventional grid to Connecticut's.

2. Oppose all attempts to build new fossil fuel infrastructure

- The first step in transitioning to a 100% renewable energy powered economy is leaving the old world of fossil fuels behind. Justin knows that we can't expect to hit Connecticut's relatively modest renewable energy targets if we keep building new natural gas plants with multi-decade lifespans.
- Justin believes in fighting all attempts to build or otherwise expand fossil fuel infrastructure, including natural gas pipelines and the [Killingly Gas Plant](#).
- Technology exists NOW to offer viable alternatives to fossil fuels. Smartly planning for and investing in these alternatives are necessary to protect our environment and public health.

3. Improve outreach, financing access, and siting say in low-income communities and communities of color through targeted policymaking and diversifying decision makers in the industry

- Low income communities and communities of color are [closely connected](#) with locating polluting energy facilities. Communities of color are particularly vulnerable, with correlations to low income and lack of representation (the [federal government](#) estimates that white families have 10 times the net worth of Black families and 8 times the worth of Hispanic families). Even when controlling for income, [race remains the single best predictor](#) of citing decisions in the state.
- Specifically focusing on communities of color and LMI residents for energy efficiency and renewable energy initiatives can make a [huge impact](#) for energy and environmental justice. Partnering directly with community groups is critical for ensuring energy representation and autonomy.
- All outreach activities and information about energy must be conducted in English, Spanish, and any other language highly represented in the area.
- Establish community seats on the Energy Efficiency Board and other state groups to ensure that traditionally underrepresented communities are served.

4. Expand and protect energy efficiency funding

- Energy efficiency is the backbone of an affordable, renewable energy-powered economy. Energy efficiency programs create good-paying jobs, stimulate the economy and cut

costs for residents. In addition, every unit of energy we avoid using through energy efficiency programs is a unit of energy we no longer have to produce — which reduces the amount of necessary state spending on renewable energy projects.

- [Efficiency programs](#) produce \$7 in economic growth for every \$1 they spend, and yet Connecticut invests in energy efficiency at roughly half the rate of our neighbors in Massachusetts and Rhode Island. When overreliance on out-of-state fuel for heating costs consumers roughly \$1.2 billion annually, promoting energy saving retrofits and efficiency technologies like heat pumps becomes critical.
- Justin will ensure that Connecticut's Energy Efficiency Fund is protected by lockboxing ratepayer funded efficiency programs. The 2017 funding raid of the Energy Efficiency Fund and the Green Energy Fund [cost consumers over \\$275 million dollars in savings](#), and put 34,000 jobs at risk. Justin will work tirelessly to protect these jobs and savings, and work to expand them in the future.

5. Ensure compensation for rooftop solar is fair to consumers

- [Net metering](#), or the practice of valuing the energy both produced and consumed by rooftop solar at a retail price, is an important incentive for homeowners and businesses to install solar. Unfortunately, based on utility pressure, [recent state regulations](#) are looking to switch from net-metering to a tariff-based system—which will likely undercut ratepayers by not paying a fair, competitive price for the energy they generate.
- Utility interests argue that this is to protect grid stability and pricing. But science shows the opposite. Connecticut needs more sustainable alternatives like small scale solar to cut down on high utility peaks, which drive up rates astronomically.
- Justin will demand that this tariff provision be revoked, ensuring that solar owners are compensated justly, protecting grid stability, and incentivising the local solar industry to protect and grow the [existing 2,000 solar jobs](#) in Connecticut.

6. Remove arbitrary regulatory barriers to renewable and shared energy development

- Most renewable and community energy programs currently have caps on the amount of kilowatt hours a given fund or program can generate. Most of these caps are arbitrary, and unconnected to grid reliability.
- Justin will advocate to [remove arbitrary caps](#) to plant size, limits to eligible participants, and siting for renewable and shared energy.

7. Facilitate small-scale and community energy generation and ownership

- Justin believes in energy democracy, or the principle that communities should have control over their energy. Decentralized, community-based renewable energy projects have the potential to deliver on this promise while also building community wealth.

- Justin believes in passing state legislation that enables and encourages community solar projects, in which community members can buy shares in cooperatively owned solar farms. [Community solar](#) can reduce prices and bring renewable energy to low-income communities who were previously shut out due to cost or tenant status.
- Local ownership adds the additional benefit of creating economic development in place, in which communities have the double financial benefit of increased savings and return on investment and the double technical benefit of increased demand response and grid resiliency. The European Union Renewable Energy Directive, for example, requires that member countries create the facilitating legislation for “[Renewable Energy Communities](#)”, giving citizens and their community energy projects the right to produce, store and sell their own renewable energy.

8. Increase access to clean and affordable energy to traditionally underserved groups like renters and those living in rural areas

- The majority of federal and state renewable options are currently focused on home and business owners. By focusing on polities like community choice aggregation and community solar, affordable renewable energy can be provided to renters. Not only are these policies more fair based on improved representation, but renters are a demographic that can be more economically vulnerable to shifts in energy prices.
- Rural communities face higher costs and barriers to energy choice. Modern infrastructure has traditionally bypassed these areas, seen as too expensive to service by private industry. Justin believes that by expanding access to distributed renewable energy through structures like CCAs and community solar, we can better service rural communities.

9. Grow high-capacity renewable energy like offshore wind, utility-scale solar, and combined fuel cell and anaerobic digester parks

- Justin knows that the first step to growing renewable energy in the state is to mandate it. While the state is growing the [Renewable Energy Portfolio Standards](#) for utilities each year (from 28% this year to 48% in 2030), Connecticut has not yet officially mandated its commitment to be 100% renewable by 2040.
- Justin will work to facilitate siting, provide low interest financing, and ensure that utility generation is best for local public health and environmental protection.
- Statewide, Connecticut has a wealth of untapped potential in offshore wind. While the Vineyard Power installation off the coast of Bridgeport this year was a good start, the facility’s 804 megawatts (MW) does not max out the [2,000 MW mandate made by the state](#). Offshore wind will benefit consumers across Connecticut, including inland, by providing clean energy without harmful pollutants or greenhouse gas emissions. In

addition, many of the parts for Connecticut's wind power are manufactured in the Naugatuck Valley, extending economic benefits to our district.

- With the right choices, Connecticut is poised well to be a leader in non-intermittent renewable technologies including [fuel cells](#) and [anaerobic digesters](#). While projects across the country are increasingly demonstrating the benefits of using methane from waste to power fuel cells, Connecticut's fuel cell installations remain dominated by natural gas--a fossil fuel. Known as the silicon valley of fuel cell technology, Connecticut has a wealth of resources to tap into to create an integrated system for regionally supplying energy, managing waste and limiting use of expensive fossil fuels. At the heart of many of these initiatives, Connecticut has the potential to grow thousands of jobs while greatly improving grid reliability, resiliency, and cost.