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POWER Climate Justice & Jobs Platform 2023 / Philadelphia

SHORT VERSION

We all depend on a healthy environment. However, we suffer from unhealthy, unsafe conditions in our homes, schools, and streets. These conditions contribute to gun violence as well as directly hurting residents' health. POWER joins allies across the city in calling for policies and investments to clean up our streets, prevent dumping, green vacant lots, plant trees, and remove toxins from our homes and schools.

On a global level, the climate crisis has brought intense storms, floods, and heatwaves. Philadelphians as well as people everywhere face the threat of catastrophic climate change in the coming years unless we act with urgency. We therefore call for a rapid shift from fossil fuels to clean energy.

Three changes are especially crucial:

- Require PGW budgets to match our city's goal for shifting from fossil fuels to clean energy, while ensuring that all residents can heat their homes at affordable rates.
- Ban the use of gas in new buildings while requiring large building owners to slash pollution.
- Expand funding for the Philadelphia Energy Authority's "Built to Last" program and other initiatives that provide home repairs, weatherization, fossil free heating/cooling systems, and solar panels for low- and moderate-income residents.

MEDIUM VERSION

We all depend on a healthy environment. But Philadelphians are suffering from major hazards, including toxins in our homes and schools, unsafe streets, and more. These conditions contribute to gun violence as well as directly hurting residents' health; they cause the greatest harm to black and brown working class communities. Big polluters profit from poisoning our communities, while decades of disinvestment have led to crumbling infrastructure and buildings. Environmental harms contribute substantially to gun violence as well as hurting residents' health directly. POWER joins allies across the city in calling for policies and investments to clean up our streets, prevent dumping, green vacant lots, plant trees, and remove toxins from our homes and schools.

On a global level, the climate crisis has brought intense storms, floods, and heatwaves. Philadelphians as well as people everywhere face the threat of catastrophic climate change in the coming years unless we act with urgency. We therefore call for a rapid shift from fossil fuels to clean energy.

To stop the pollution that is heating up our planet and fueling the climate crisis, we must transform Philadelphia's utilities, buildings, transportation system, and waste system, within the next 20 years. A Philly Green New Deal would improve public health, reduce energy bills, make our homes safer and more comfortable, and create thousands of good jobs while rapidly replacing fossil fuels with clean energy. The enactment of a Philly Green New Deal must begin now.

Three changes are especially crucial:

- Through appointments and legislation, the next mayor and city council must require PGW budgets to match our city's goal for shifting from fossil fuels to clean energy, while ensuring that all residents can heat their homes at affordable rates.
- Philadelphia officials must follow the lead of other cities by banning the use of gas in new buildings while requiring large building owners to slash pollution dramatically.
- We call for expanded funding for the Philadelphia Energy Authority's "Built to Last" program and other initiatives that provide home repairs, weatherization, fossil free heating/cooling systems, and solar panels for low- and moderate-income residents.

LONG VERSION

Introduction

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The next Mayor and City Council must:

1. Commit to democratic, transparent planning for our energy system & buildings.
2. Establish rules that require local institutions to shift from fossil fuels to clean energy; and
3. Step up public investment, prioritizing the needs of communities of color—particularly those who are suffering the most from unlivable conditions.

Other major cities are far ahead of Philadelphia in these areas. The next mayor must appoint officials who will deliver high quality services, and lead the transition to one hundred percent renewable energy jobs, in transparent and accountable ways.

We ask all candidates to commit to policies formulated by POWER's Climate Justice & Jobs Team, which focus on transforming Philadelphia Gas Works and transitioning buildings across our city to use affordable, renewable energy. In addition, we urge candidates to commit to policies that our key allies are demanding.

Transforming PGW

PGW is the largest municipally-owned gas utility in the nation and an enormous pillar of Philadelphia's energy system. It is essential that PGW move rapidly away from “dirty energy” and into affordable, renewable energy with good jobs and improved health and safety.

Over the past four years, organizations across Philadelphia have [pressed for the City](#) to begin changing PGW into a utility that provides both heating and cooling¹ without the use of fossil fuels, while creating union jobs. They have also pressed for PGW to operate in a more transparent and accountable manner. During that time, there has been minimal progress. PGW executives have aggressively sought to [increase the sale of gas](#), moved to [reduce public oversight and participation](#), and even [participated in writing a state preemption bill](#) that would limit the ability of our City government to enact needed policies.

We call on the Mayor and City Council to lead the transformation that we need.

For Mayoral Candidates:

- **Appointments** – The Mayor will appoint Philadelphia Facilities Management Corporation (PFMC) board members and Gas Commissioners who commit to ensuring that PGW's business plans, budgets, and incentives match the City's climate goals. That requires rapidly phasing out the use of natural gas to heat buildings and transforming PGW into a utility that provides both affordable heating and cooling without the use of fossil fuels.
- **Legislation** – The Mayor will sign legislation that achieves the goals listed below.

For City Council Candidates:

- City Council Members will take the lead in enacting legislation that:
 - Requires PGW to produce business plans, budgets and incentives that match the City's goal for phasing out the use of fossil fuels (by 2050 at the latest), with clear 5-year incremental goals, while guaranteeing affordable energy to all residents.
 - Requires the Philadelphia Gas Commission to evaluate PGW's compliance with the City's climate goals as well as the goal of guaranteeing affordable energy to all Philadelphians as part of the annual review process for PGW budgets and to share this benchmark reporting with the public. The legislation should also increase the budget for the Gas Commission in order to ensure that the Commission has sufficient staffing and resources to carry out this important task effectively.
 - Requires the Gas Commission to conduct budget review proceedings that allow grassroots organizations to ask questions of PGW executives through a formal discovery process and to cross-examine PGW witnesses who testify at hearings.
 - Requires PGW executives to provide transparency about PGW's lobbying and other advocacy activities, and prohibits payments to fossil fuel trade associations.
 - Requires the Philadelphia Facilities Management Corporation (PFMC) to hold public meetings and publish meeting transcripts.

¹ As summer heatwaves grow more intense, the need for all Philadelphians to have affordable cooling in their homes is growing more urgent. PGW has the potential to supply both heating and cooling using electric heat pumps and thermal network systems.

- City Council Members will enact policies to protect everyone's right to affordable energy. POWER joins environmental justice partners across the city to call for:
 - Directing PGW to reduce barriers to Philadelphians accessing PGW's Customer Responsibility Program.
 - Requiring PGW to create and fund a plan to reduce shutoffs year-over-year and require PGW to be transparent about the number of shutoffs carried out.
 - Ending PGW's Weather Normalization Adjustment Program which requires customers to pay for gas they have not used.
- City Council Members will enact policies to preserve and create union jobs, as well as protecting pensions and benefits, through the energy transition.

Transforming Our Buildings

Cities like NYC, Washington, Boston, and Los Angeles are implementing strong policies to advance a rapid and just shift from fossil fuels to clean energy in buildings. They are [banning the use of gas in new buildings](#) and [requiring large building owners to dramatically cut emissions](#). Just as importantly, they are developing plans for [large-scale investment in home repairs](#) and [clean energy retrofits for low-income residents](#), as well as installing [efficient, all-electric, fossil-free HVAC systems in public schools](#). Philadelphia must follow suit.

We call on City Council and Mayoral candidates to commit to the following goals:

1. Enact requirements for developers & building owners that match Philly's climate goals:

- a. Pass legislation that prohibits the installation of gas appliances in new buildings, with few exceptions (following the lead of cities like [NYC](#), [DC](#), and Los Angeles).
- b. Prohibit installation of gas-powered furnaces, boilers, or water heaters in publicly owned buildings ([as in Washington, DC](#)).
- c. Require deep cuts in greenhouse gas emissions from large buildings across the city, as in NYC and [Boston](#), with interim goals over the next 2 decades that line up with Philadelphia's climate goals.

2. Democratic planning: With full participation from communities and unions, develop a master plan for retrofitting all buildings across the City in order to:

- a. Phase out the use of fossil fuels.
- b. Improve public health.
- c. Ensure affordability.
- d. Create good union jobs, prioritizing workers currently employed in the fossil fuel industry and people who have been denied access to living wage employment as a result of racial and gender discrimination and/or mass incarceration.

To ensure this process advances equity goals, we also need a new cabinet-level position to coordinate and oversee equitable decarbonization planning, investments, and regulations.

3. Invest now in transforming our homes and hold landlords accountable

- a. Expand funding for the Philadelphia Energy Authority's "Built to Last" program and related programs to provide home repairs, weatherization, fossil-free heating & cooling, induction stoves, and solar panels for low and moderate income Philadelphians, along with green workforce development.
 - i. Allocate additional funds from the city budget.
 - ii. Ensure Philly takes full advantage of the federal Inflation Reduction Act.
 - iii. Work with allies to secure additional funds from state & federal government.
- b. Ensure that grants provided to landlords for repairing and retrofitting their properties are matched with strict tenant protection requirements that ensure tenants are not subject to large rent increases or non-renewal of their leases.
- c. Increase funding for L&I so that the agency proactively inspects all rental properties on a regular basis and enforces the city's housing code effectively. In addition, provide funding for repair programs and emergency housing programs to protect

tenant safety and prevent displacement caused by landlord negligence. Develop these policies in consultation with [Renters United Philadelphia](#).

4. Safe, Healthy, Fossil-Free Schools

- a. City Council and the Mayor will earmark School District funding to immediately clean up toxic schools & ensure that all schools become healthy, safe, and fossil free.
- b. The Mayor will appoint School Board members who will ensure that the District creates and implements a transformative program to repair and upgrade school buildings with effective fossil-free HVAC systems. The School Board members must commit to meeting ASHRAE's forthcoming indoor air quality standards for classrooms. Philly Democratic Socialists of America's "Safe Air for Every School" program is a good interim pathway to achieving this goal.

Additional Priorities

We also call on City Council and Mayoral candidates to commit to the following goals:

1. Join POWER in pressing the PA Public Utility Commission to require PECO to expand its purchases of electricity from renewable sources as part of its next Default Service Plan.
2. Expand funding for the City's Office of Sustainability. See: [Will the next Mayor prioritize or destabilize Philly's sustainability goals? – Green Philly \(thegreencities.com\)](#)
3. Fund the [place-based environmental justice initiatives](#) promoted by the 57 Blocks coalition, with the goal of improving conditions and preventing gun violence in communities that have been hit hardest by violence.
4. Hold Hilco accountable for negotiating a Community Benefits Agreement and executing a plan for green development on the PES Refinery site.
5. Enact the [Waste Free Philly agenda](#) to ensure efficient and reliable waste collection, recycling, litter prevention and enforcement programs in its role to support and expand the circular economy. We must also end dumping and littering by 2028 to restore a quality of life for all Philadelphians that contributes to a safe, clean and thriving ecosystem.
6. Ban incineration of Philadelphia's solid waste in the City of Chester or any other location.
7. Commit to the [Better Mobility Platform](#), in order to improve and expand public transit, improve conditions for cyclists and pedestrians and make our streets safer for all.
8. Fund and implement the [Philly Tree Plan](#).
9. Fund and implement the Philadelphia Public Financial Authority that City Council authorized in 2022, following the lead of the [Philadelphia Public Banking Coalition](#). The next Mayor should appoint board members who are ready to guide the PPFA in providing low-cost financing for renewable energy projects and green, affordable housing initiatives.