

Opinion: Tahoe-Reno area needs clean energy

By Andy Wirth

Last week the Reno City Council voted to support the Clean Power Plan, which will help to move our country away from dirty coal power toward clean and renewable energy. With their vote, the council became yet another important entity in the region to pledge support for the Clean Power Plan, joining a great many private sector companies. These very different voices have come together to press our utilities and ultimately our society towards clean energy by way of the Clean Power Plan. I sincerely applaud their actions.



Andy Wirth

The times aren't changing – they have already notably changed. A new, healthy, sustainable, diverse and growing economy is upon us – providing opportunity for all in the region. We've already made a great deal of progress in building our clean energy economy and thankfully, the companies leading the way in this transition are keeping the pressure on our utilities and elected officials. We need truly clean energy – now, not at some distant point in the future.

This is the moment ... the chance for all of us to ask more from our elected officials ... to ask for more than just compliance, but actual leadership. We can make this region the leader and the example on truly clean energy for the 21st century and

create a healthy and stronger economy along the way. Now is the moment we should ask our elected officials to use long-term, rational and logical thinking, not give in to well-heeled special interest groups. We know that a healthy and vibrant economy is actually made possible, not hindered, by policies such as the Clean Power Plan.

The topic of clean energy is apolitical. In our region's case, it's about the stark reality of the unacceptably poor quality air we breathe, the drought and increased forest fires. It's about the immutable truths of our carbon footprint and our region's contributions to the climate woes of our hemisphere. It's about the fact that despite having access to some of the best solar and geothermal energy in the nation, we're still burning coal for electricity at the Valmy coal plant. But it's also about

opportunity, the fact that we have the chance to help usher in clean energy sourcing at the same time we welcome some of the world's leading companies, such as Tesla, Microsoft and Apple. These companies are very clearly stating that clean energy is the future while at the same time they are helping to supercharge our region's economy with quality jobs.

I submit we find ourselves at an important moment in time, if not a crux move (as climbers put it) of a great opportunity to achieve something remarkable as a community: by supporting the Clean Power Plan and going beyond it to a truly clean energy future, we advance this important cause while also benefitting from a growing economy. Along with many others in the business community in our region, I ask our elected officials – those in Congress, those in state government and local civic entities such as the forward thinking city of Reno – to advance rapidly to maximum clean energy while we simultaneously advance a robust regional economy.

Andy Wirth is the chairman of the board of the Reno Tahoe Airport Board of Trustees and president and CEO of Squaw Valley Ski Holdings. His views are not officially

representative of the RTAA board of trustees.