



TUED Fact Sheet No. 1

Introducing Trade Unions for Energy Democracy

Founded in 2013, Trade Unions for Energy Democracy (TUED) is a global, multi-sector initiative to advance democratic direction and control of energy. TUED promotes solutions to the climate crisis, energy poverty, and the degradation of both land and people and that respond to attacks on workers' rights and protections.

We Need an Energy Transition

- ⇒ We are facing an unprecedented energy emergency. Fossil fuel use is rising. Temperatures are going up. Droughts, wildfires, typhoons, and floods are all becoming more frequent and severe.
- ⇒ In 2012 alone, poor air quality, largely the result of burning fossil fuels, claimed the lives of seven million people, according to the World Health Organization.
- ⇒ Even though more energy is being generated each year, more than 1.3 billion people worldwide are without electricity and another 1 billion have unreliable access.
- ⇒ If current trends continue, CO₂ emissions will increase by 50% between 2010 and 2035. This puts us on course for a 6 degree Celsius rise in average global temperature in the lifetime of children born today.
- ⇒ That means human civilization, as we know it, is in real danger.



Energy for Profit is Not Working

Renewable energy has the potential to completely transform the global energy system by 2030. Global warming can be controlled if emissions are dramatically reduced. But despite all the talk about “going green,” renewable energy use is not growing fast enough to appreciably slow down the rise in fossil fuel use. Today, “modern renewables” like wind and solar generate less than 4% of the world’s electricity.



Why isn't this transition happening? It's simple. The current energy system is not focused on meeting the needs of workers, communities, and the environment—it's about maximizing the profits of big corporations. In the U.S. alone, the top five oil companies amassed almost \$1 trillion dollars in profits over the last decade. These are the same corporations that force workers to work in unsafe conditions, break unions, and seek to roll back democratic and human rights.

Profit-driven approaches to implementing renewable energy are not working. Renewable energy must be considered a public good, developed and delivered as a public service for the benefit of all. Real change can only happen if there is a shift in power towards workers, communities, and the public.



Energy Democracy

With energy democracy, profit-driven, exploitative energy generation and consumption would be replaced by community-owned facilities and reclaimed public utilities.

With energy democracy, we could have a planned and orderly transition to renewable energy over a period of two or three decades. Workers presently in fossil fuels would be protected, and millions of new jobs would be created.

Energy democracy could bring the benefits of renewable energy to everybody, including those today without electrical power.



Resist, Reclaim, Restructure

The energy democracy agenda can be distilled to three principles:

- ⇒ We must *resist* the agenda of large energy companies that mine and drill for fossil fuels and promote large new projects that will lock in more emissions and pollution.
- ⇒ We must *reclaim* the right for communities to exert democratic control and social ownership over the energy industry.
- ⇒ And we must *restructure* the energy system, and start a planned and orderly transition to renewable energy under worker, community, and municipal control.

What We Do

TUED is helping to build and strengthen a global trade union community for energy democracy. We are a platform for trade unions from all sectors and countries to debate, develop, and promote real solutions to the climate crisis, land grabs, energy poverty, and pollution generated by fossil fuels—solutions that can build worker and community power and advance social and environmental justice.

TUED develops high-impact union educational materials, publishes a bi-weekly electronic bulletin, and convenes meetings and working retreats that encourage debate and help create a shared analysis of key energy and climate issues.

TUED connects the energy democracy agenda to union struggles and campaigns in ways that build broad membership engagement, increase worker power, and facilitate solidarity across movements that share similar goals.

Another energy system is necessary, and it is possible. Let's make it a reality, together.

unionsforenergydemocracy.org

