

30 COALITIONS
THE RENEWABLE ENERGY INDUSTRY SHOULD KNOW
A RENEWABLE ENERGY ISSUES BRIEF



Published: June 9, 2009
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I recently read the book, “Freedom from Oil” by David Sandalow and the reader’s journey begins with a very resonating quote, “Make no small plans, for they have no power to stir the soul.” The book was insightful and creative and speaks volumes about how policy decisions are made in America.

However, there was one element lacking in the book; how to truly activate the American people in our country’s effort to reinvent itself into a green economy. Similar to how the World Wars helped to pull our country out of multiple recessions, I am confident that the renewable energy industry will bring us out of recession and into the age of the Green Economy.

There are two challenges that if not addressed immediately could keep this new America from happening: the inability of the renewable energy industry to set aside its egos and opinions and REALLY work together; and the inability of the renewable energy industry to activate consumers at local levels due to its current communication strategies and tactics. As our energy economy is changing, so must our communication economy. Don’t be disheartened. One strategy is a solution to both challenges.

THE QUESTION IS: HOW DO WE BUILD THE NEW GREEN ENERGY ECONOMY?

“...if Americans and a new, broader environmental and climate movement are to be successful, we will need to find more successful ways to think and **talk** about—or frame—global climate change and its serious impacts already becoming visible around the country,” writes Robert Musil in his book, “Hope for a Heated Planet”. One way to reframe this conversation, he explains, is to show people that the environment is not just around us but inside us. “It is us.”

How exactly is the renewable energy industry going to move America into the age of sustainable living? **Through coalition building**. Not through the creation of more councils, alliances and coalitions but through *developing* partnerships with associations that are *already in place* implementing proven, effective national and grassroots programs.

THE ANSWER IS: COALITION BUILDING NOT COALITION CREATION

Many readers are probably asking, “*Why not create new coalitions?*” Don’t they have great PR value? A new venue and voice? A new organization to push out information? No. And the next time your public relations (PR) council suggests that you create a new coalition, fire them, and here is why.

Coalitions, councils, alliances, and think tanks are used very successively by Big Oil, King Coal and their friends. These groups are most often set up as “front groups” to disseminate

information. Oftentimes consumers can't see through the veil of deceit and accept these organizations' research and expertise as gospel. [SourceWatch](#), an organization that "outs" front groups defines them as, "...an organization that purports to represent one agenda while in reality it serves some other party or interest whose sponsorship is hidden or rarely mentioned." (See Issue Brief, ["10 Big Oil Front Groups to Watch."](#))

For those of you in PR, required reading should be "Toxic Sludge is Good For You!" Although an unflattering portrayal of the industry, many of the authors' insights are true. Take for example the words of wisdom shared about coalitions, "The growing proliferation of phony grassroots groups prompted a May 1994 article titled, "Public Interest Pretenders" in *Consumer Reports* magazine."

'That group with the do-good name may not be what it seems. There was a time when one usually could tell what an advocacy group stood for—and who stood behind it—simply by its name. Today, 'councils' 'coalitions,' 'alliances,' and groups with 'citizens' and 'consumers' in their names could as likely be fronts for corporations and trade associations as representatives of 'citizens' or 'consumers.' These public interest pretenders work in so many ways—through advertisements, press releases, public testimony, bogus surveys, questionable public-opinion polls, and general disinformation—that it's hard to figure out who's who or what the group's real agenda might be.'

Despite the unflattering portrayal of advocacy groups, there are many groups who disclose their missions, goals, programs, members, and funding sources—they are completely transparent about who they are, what they do and where they get their money. These are not "front groups" they are coalitions of people trying to do the right thing. These are the groups the renewable energy industry should look to create partnerships.

THE PLAYBOOK: RETIRE THIS MOVE

The industry should not emulate Big Oil's tactic of creating front groups but it should be emulating the reasons for their success. Big Oil, King Coal and their friends get together and discuss challenges and opportunities affecting their businesses. They develop policy plans and communications plans. Then they go out and implement them *without media attention and public fanfare about what they are doing*. They simply agree to put differences aside to focus on the big picture and when on the Hill or speaking to a reporter, these groups deliver a consistent message. And maybe more importantly, when one industry, for example the paper industry, gets criticized for its use of water, Big Oil and friends come along to help them out.

When is the last time you heard the renewable energy industry come out in support of each other and actually mean it?

THE PLAYBOOK: IMPLEMENT THIS MOVE

The time is now for the renewable energy industry to work together and to reach out to organizations that on the surface don't seem like allies. I'm not referring to partnering with the [usual suspects](#) — Environmental Defense, Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC) World Wildlife Defense Fund, and the Sierra Club — groups that do great work but are often viewed as tree-hugging left-wing, environmental crazies that are promoting policies that will fiscally ruin Big Business. I'm talking about the *unusual* suspects with effective grassroots communications and policy programs already in place.

I haven't worked with most of these coalitions so organizations should do some research on the organization to ensure that the group's mission and programs coincide with your organization's mission and programs.

Here are five things you should know before you engage in a relationship:

1. What does the organization stand for/what are they fighting to change?
2. Where does the organization get its funding?
3. Who are the organization's members?
4. Who is the organization partnering with?
5. What is the organization's policy platform?

If you can't get an answer to all of these questions then you should be leery—you may have found a front group.

THE NEW PLAYERS

The next section will identify and break down 30 groups that my research has shown have already developed large membership bases, strong grassroots programs and/or policy programs. Understanding that the renewable energy industry is working through financially challenging times, the intent is not to fund these groups, but partner with them to extend current resources through sharing communications and policy strategies. To adopt a well worn cliché, to partner with organizations that have already “created the wheel.” This list is not exhaustive but merely a starting point and is broken down into six categories: student organizations, religious organizations, environmental organizations, renewable energy organizations, peace based organizations, and business based organizations.

*A quick note, in the renewable energy organizations list, I chose groups that support multiple forms of energy. However, there are a lot of great industry organizations to consider in the wind, solar, biofuels, geothermal, hydrogen, hydroelectric, and electric vehicles/plug-in vehicles industries. Consider reaching out to these organizations as you research coalitions with which to partner.

STUDENT ORGANIZATIONS

Campus Climate Challenge - The Campus Climate Challenge is a project of more than 30 leading youth organizations throughout the U.S. and Canada. The Challenge leverages the power of young people to organize on college campuses and high schools across Canada and the U.S. to win 100% Clean Energy policies at their schools. The Challenge is growing a generation-wide movement to stop global warming, by reducing the pollution from our high schools and colleges down to zero, and leading our society to a clean energy future.

Campus Greens - Campus Greens are students, faculty, and staff of America's colleges, universities, and high schools. Campus Greens are determined to build a radical democratic movement that empower Campus Greens Americans to overcome the grave social, racial, economic, and environmental problems faced by our nation and world.

Energy Action Coalition - Founded in June 2004 by youth climate leaders, the Energy Action Coalition unites a diversity of organizations in an alliance that supports and strengthens the student and youth clean and just energy movement in North America. The 36 active and 14 supporting partners of Energy Action Coalition work together to leverage our collective power and create change for a clean, efficient, just and renewable energy future. Our Coalition is addressing climate change by winning clean energy victories at the local, state, national, and international level - all while growing and strengthening the clean energy movement among young people from all walks of life in the United States and Canada.

Green Corps - The one-year Green Corps program intersperses intensive classroom instruction with multiple campaign efforts. Trainees gain hands-on experience running field campaigns to win environmental protections and public health initiatives. Throughout the year, each trainee receives specific individualized feedback on all aspects of his or her work, as well as local mentorship from environmental organizers throughout the nation. At the end of the training, the Green Corps program facilitates trainees' placement in permanent positions with leading environmental and social change groups.

Sierra Student Coalition - The Sierra Student Coalition (SSC) is a broad network of high school and college-aged youth from across the country working to protect the environment. The SSC is the youth-led chapter of the Sierra Club, the nation's oldest and largest grassroots environmental organization. With more than 250 groups nationwide, the SSC develops environmental leaders through our award-winning grassroots training programs and works to maximize our campus-based effectiveness through the creation and maintenance of state and regional networks of high school and college students.

Student Environmental Action Coalition – The Student Environmental Action Coalition (SEAC) is a grassroots coalition of student and youth environmental groups, working together to protect our planet and our future. Through this united effort, thousands of youth have translated

their concern into action by sharing resources, building coalitions, and challenging the limited mainstream definition of environmental issues.

Students for a Democratic Society - Students for a Democratic Society is a radical, multi-issue student and youth organization working to build power in our schools and communities. We are entirely student and youth-led and have over 100 active chapters in high schools, colleges, universities, and cities all over the country.

Student PIRG's - The student PIRGs are independent state-based student organizations that work to solve public interest problems related to the environment, consumer protection, and government reform. For 35 years, students who have been involved with their PIRG campus chapter have not only learned how to investigate a problem and come up with a practical solution. They've also learned how to convince the media and decision-makers to pay attention and take action. Student PIRGs gain an educational experience in democratic citizenship. In addition, they get a chance to face up to society's big problems, take action, and win concrete changes that improve the quality of our lives.

RELIGIOUS ORGANIZATIONS

Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility - Through the lens of faith, Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility (ICCR) builds a more just and sustainable world by integrating social values into corporate and investor actions. ICCR raises the prophetic voice of faith to change the way companies conduct themselves as good corporate citizens. We promote transformation in corporate policies and practices, driven by changes in how companies relate to investors, stakeholders and the global community.

Jubilee USA Network - Jubilee USA Network is an alliance of more than 80 religious denominations and faith communities, human rights, environmental, labor, and community groups working for the definitive cancellation of crushing debts to fight poverty and injustice in Asia, Africa, and Latin America.

World Council of Churches - The World Council of Churches (WCC) is the broadest and most inclusive among the many organized expressions of the modern ecumenical movement, a movement whose goal is Christian unity. The WCC brings together 349 churches, denominations and church fellowships in more than 110 countries and territories throughout the world, representing over 560 million Christians and including most of the world's Orthodox churches, scores of Anglican, Baptist, Lutheran, Methodist and Reformed churches, as well as many United and Independent churches. While the bulk of the WCC's founding churches were European and North American, today most member churches are in Africa, Asia, the Caribbean, Latin America, the Middle East and the Pacific.

ENVIRONMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS

[1Sky](#) – 1Sky was created in 2007 to focus the power of millions of concerned Americans on a single goal: bold federal action by 2010 that can stem global warming. The 1Sky Solutions are grounded in scientific necessity—they are the bottom line of what's needed to dramatically reduce carbon emissions while maximizing energy efficiency, renewable energy and breakthrough technologies. They also represent significant economic promise. By pivoting to a clean energy economy, we can relieve our dependence on foreign oil, unlock the potential of sustainable industry and usher in a new era of prosperity and green jobs.

[Clean Air-Cool Planet](#) - Clean Air-Cool Planet (CA-CP) is the leading organization dedicated solely to finding and promoting solutions to global warming:

[Communities for a Better Environment](#) - Communities for a Better Environment (CBE) is a social justice organization with a focus on environmental health and justice. We organize in working class communities of color because those communities suffer the most from environmental pollution and toxics. CBE works in urban communities in Northern and Southern California among low-income African Americans, Latinos and other nationalities who are bombarded by pollution from freeways, power plants, oil refineries, seaports, airports, and chemical manufacturers.

[Environment America](#) - Environment America is a federation of state-based, citizen-funded environmental advocacy organizations. Our professional staff in 27 states and Washington, D.C., combines independent research, practical ideas and tough-minded advocacy to overcome the opposition of powerful special interests and win real results for the environment. Environment America draws on 30 years of success in tackling environmental problems.

[League of Conservation Voters](#) - The League of Conservation Voters (LCV) is turning environmental values into national priorities. To secure the environmental future of our planet, LCV's mission is to advocate for sound environmental policies and to elect pro-environmental candidates who will adopt and implement such policies.

[Refinery Reform Campaign](#) - The Refinery Reform Campaign is a national campaign seeking to clean up America's oil refineries and reduce our dependence on fossil fuels.

RENEWABLE ENERGY ORGANIZATIONS

[25x25](#) - "25x25" is a rallying cry for renewable energy and a goal for America – to get 25 percent of our energy from renewable resources like wind, solar, and biofuels by the year 2025.

[Alliance to Save Energy](#) – Founded in 1977, the Alliance to Save Energy is a non-profit coalition of business, government, environmental and consumer leaders. The Alliance to Save

Energy supports energy efficiency as a cost-effective energy resource under existing market conditions and advocates energy-efficiency policies that minimize costs to society and individual consumers, and that lessen greenhouse gas emissions and their impact on the global climate. To carry out its mission, the Alliance to Save Energy undertakes research, educational programs, and policy advocacy, designs and implements energy-efficiency projects, promotes technology development and deployment, and builds public-private partnerships, in the U.S. and other countries.

American Council on Renewable Energy – The American Council On Renewable Energy (ACORE) works to bring all forms of renewable energy into the mainstream of America’s economy and lifestyle. ACORE accomplishes much of its work by convening the leaders in each renewable energy sector, publishing collaborative research and facilitating communications among members, their stakeholders and the media. With a focus on trade, finance and policy, ACORE promotes all renewable energy options for the production of electricity, hydrogen, fuels and end-use energy.

Apollo Alliance - The Apollo Alliance is a coalition of labor, business, environmental, and community leaders working to catalyze a clean energy revolution that will put millions of Americans to work in a new generation of high-quality, green-collar jobs. Inspired by the Apollo space program, we promote investments in energy efficiency, clean power, mass transit, next-generation vehicles, and emerging technology, as well as in education and training. Working together, we will reduce carbon emissions and oil imports, spur domestic job growth, and position America to thrive in the 21st century economy.

Community-Based Energy Development – Community-Based Energy Development (C-BED) is an organization of farmers and landowners, mainstreet businesses and bankers, wind developers and component fabricators, educators, renewable energy advocates, and other members of our local communities. We share a desire to develop renewable energy resources in a way that optimizes local economic development in the communities in which we live and work.

Energy Future Coalition - The Energy Future Coalition is a nonpartisan public policy initiative that seeks to speed the transition to a new energy economy. Combining expertise and advocacy, the Coalition brings together business, labor, and environmental groups to identify new directions in energy policy with broad political support. The Energy Future Coalition works closely with the United Nations Foundation on energy and climate policy, especially energy efficiency and bioenergy issues. The UN Foundation provides financial and in-kind support to the Coalition.

Green For All - Green For All is a national organization dedicated to improving the lives of all Americans through a clean energy economy. The organization works in collaboration with the business, government, labor, and grassroots communities to create and implement programs that increase quality jobs and opportunities in green industry – all while holding the most vulnerable people at the center of its agenda.

[*Oil Change International*](#) - Oil Change International campaigns to expose the true costs of oil and facilitate the coming transition towards clean energy. We are dedicated to identifying and overcoming political barriers to that transition.

PEACE BASED ORGANIZATIONS

[*CODEPINK*](#) - CODEPINK is a women-initiated grassroots peace and social justice movement working to end the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, stop new wars, and redirect our resources into healthcare, education, green jobs and other life-affirming activities. CODEPINK rejects foreign policies based on domination and aggression, and instead calls for policies based on diplomacy, compassion and a commitment to international law. With an emphasis on joy and humor, CODEPINK women and men seek to activate, amplify and inspire a community of peacemakers through creative campaigns and a commitment to non-violence.

[*Set America Free Coalition*](#) - The Set America Free coalition brings together prominent individuals and non-profit organizations from across the political spectrum. Concerned about the security and economic implications of America's growing dependence on foreign oil, members include security experts, environmental leaders, former prisoners of war, 9-11 families, business and religious leaders. While each member's individual ideology may differ—one thing unites us: the belief that fuel choice in the transportation sector can strip oil of its strategic value, deny our adversaries the wherewithal they use to harm us, and help protect our quality of life and economy against the effects of cuts in foreign energy supplies and rising costs of oil.

BUSINESS BASED ORGANIZATIONS

[*Climate Group*](#) – Over the next five years, The Climate Group's goal is to help government and business set the world economy on the path to a low-carbon, prosperous future. To reach this goal, we've created a coalition of governments and the world's most influential businesses – all committed to tackling climate change. Through this coalition, we're helping to set the targets, create the policies, build the confidence, and generate the political willpower needed to make the changes the world requires by 2050.

[*EcoChamber*](#) – EcoChamber serves to help our members grow, gain recognition and prosper by championing economic prosperity, stewardship of our lands and quality of life. The EcoChamber will help you accomplish the goals that are most important to you. We will help you gain recognition for your environmental leadership, boost your business, raise your impact and lift your community. As the foremost voice for sustainable practices, we will be the driving force for environmentally friendly progress and prosperity by helping encourage the adoption of responsible environmental actions across public and private sectors.

[*New Voice of Business*](#) - New Voice of Business promotes economic, social and environmental sustainability in the United States. Our mission is to inform, engage, and mobilize an influential

network of business people – a unified, new voice of business to advocate for a sustainable economy and encourage triple bottom line business practices. Our focus in 2009 is on energy policy that meets the challenge of global warming while promoting innovation, entrepreneurship and economic growth.

RESOURCES

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Sandalow, David. Freedom From Oil: How the Next President Can End the United States' Oil Addiction. McGraw-Hill, 2007.

Schroeder, Joanna. 10 Front Groups You Should Know About. 4R Communications, April 15, 2009.

Stauber, John and Rampton, Sheldon. Toxic Sludge is Good For You! Common Courage Press, 1995.

LIST OF COALITION WEBSITES

1Sky — www.1sky.org
25x25 — www.25x25.org
Alliance to Save Energy — www.ase.org
American Council on Renewable Energy — www.acore.org
Apollo Alliance — www.apolloalliance.org
Campus Climate Challenge — www.climatechallenge.org
Campus Greens — www.campusgreens.org
Clean Air-Cool Planet — www.cleanair-coolplanet.org
Climate Group — www.theclimategroup.org
CODEPINK — www.codepink4peace.org
Community-Based Energy Development — www.c-bed.org
Communities for a Better Environment — www.cbecal.org
EcoChamber — www.ecochamber.com
Energy Action Coalition — www.energyactioncoalition.org
Energy Future Coalition — www.energyfuturecoalition.org
Environment America — www.environmentamerica.org
Green Corps — www.greencorps.org
Green For All — www.greenforall.org
Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility — www.iccr.org
Jubilee USA Network — www.jubileeusa.org
League of Conservation Voters — www.lcv.org
New Voice of Business — www.newvoiceofbusiness.org
Oil Change International — www.priceofoil.org
Refinery Reform Campaign — www.refineryreform.org
Set America Free Coalition — www.setamericafree.org
Sierra Student Coalition — <http://ssc.sierraclub.org>
Student Environmental Action Coalition — www.seac.org
Student PIRG's — www.studentpirgs.org
Students for a Democratic Society — www.studentsforademocraticssociety.org
World Council of Churches — www.oikoumene.org



ABOUT 4R COMMUNICATIONS

4R Communications is a consultancy whose principal has more than eight years experience in public relations and marketing communications in the renewable energy and agriculture industries. The organization has expertise in counseling clients on the most effective ways to communicate product advantages for industries that are rapidly changing due to government legislation, global climate concerns, economic turmoil, and consumer support volatility. To learn more about how 4R Communications can help your business, contact Joanna Schroeder, APR at jms@4RCommunications.com.