

MODULE

8

Environmental Policy and Activism

"Earth provides enough to satisfy every man's needs, but not every man's greed."

-Mahatma Gandhi

Introduction

Policy based on the environment has been fluctuating significantly through recent history. Up until a few years ago, many people still genuinely did not believe in the process of climate change and the effect of mankind on the planet. While some people are still hesitant to believe that climate change is as important of a topic scientists are mostly at a consensus that climate change is real and an imminent threat to the planet.

Objectives

1. Students will be able to recognize the importance of laws supporting environmental health.
2. Students will be able to analyze the Future Energy Jobs Act and the Clean Air Act
3. Students will be able to apply policy analysis skills on Environmental Policy.

Agenda

1. Future Energy Jobs Act
2. Activism
3. Activity
4. Debate
5. Supplemental

Content

Future Energy Jobs Act

Purpose:

To apply policy analysis skills by evaluating the Future Energy Jobs Act.

Sources:

1. <https://www.citizensutilityboard.org/future-energy-jobs-act/>
2. <https://ilcleanjobs.org/who-we-are/energy-jobs-act/>
3. <https://energynews.us/2019/02/28/midwest/aggressive-clean-energy-bill-would-push-illinois-to-100-renewables-by-2050/>

Lecture Notes:

Environmental policy is based off of environmental health, and global warming is a huge part of this. One of the things that have been suspected to be a main contributor to global warming is the increase in the production of greenhouse gases.

*Fun Fact: It takes 20 years for a head of lettuce to decompose in a landfill. And when biodegradable items are put into landfills they release methane which is a stronger greenhouse gas than carbon dioxide.

The world has become increasingly reliant on energy sources that are unsustainable and nonrenewable. This has a plethora of negative effects, ranging from the fact that we will eventually run out of nonrenewable energy to releasing greenhouse gases.

The solution proposed by the Illinois Legislature was the Future Energy Jobs Act. The Act essentially forces larger companies (especially electric companies) to switch at least 25% of their energy use (a huge amount) to renewable energy by the year 2025.

The Act was designed with a positive side effect in mind- the increased usage and decreased rarity of these resources would naturally decrease their cost, allowing renewable energy to become even more affordable.

The act also provided \$750 million dedicated to offering clean energy jobs to low-income people, seniors, and disabled veterans in hopes of stimulating the economy. Lastly, the act offered rebates (cash back) for people purchasing and installing solar panels in order to add an incentive for buying them. This could create interest in buying solar panels.

There are many features of the Future Energy Jobs Act. One part of this act was to reduce electricity waste and expand the energy efficiency programs of Commonwealth Edison and Ameren Illinois; another was to fix the renewable energy laws of Illinois; the final feature of this act is to give money to programs that provide training for jobs and reduce the costs of consumers' utility bills. It cuts down the amount of electricity utilized and expands programs that encourage decreased energy usage of consumers. FEJA also creates tens of thousands of new jobs which The National Resources Defense Council estimated can save up to \$7 billion in net savings for customers.

The reason why this policy is different from previous ones is because the energy companies that implement this policy actually receive monetary benefits from it. With this bill, Illinois can now compete in the race to build a sustainable clean energy economy. This bill will also invest more than \$750 million into low-income programs like the Illinois Solar for All

Program to provide solar power and job training in disadvantaged communities.

The Clean Energy Jobs Act was implemented in 2016 to add to the details of the Future Energy Jobs Act. This bill plans to reduce carbon pollution and increase the development of renewable energy, energy efficiency, rate structures and others to help the shift. FEJA wasn't as successful as it was projected to be because the benefits/incentives that came from the low-income solar projects are being used by companies towards other larger projects and not the low-income neighborhoods like it was intended. The Clean Energy Jobs Act would specify what projects would receive these incentives. "On-site distributed generation in projects that are 100% low-income subscriber owned, including low-income households, nonprofit organizations, and affordable housing owners, as well as projects 100% owned by households located in environmental justice communities....". This bill also includes the use of electric vehicles and aims to increase their use in low-income communities. It does this by providing low-cost programs where electric vehicles will be available to help people in low-income communities commute from different places.

FEJA Policy Cycle (15 minutes)

Purpose:

Students will learn how to analyze and go through the Policy Cycle with the FEJA.

Materials:

Laptop

Directions:

Have students research the Future Energy Jobs Act and analyze the steps this policy went through to come into fruition. Also tell students that they should analyze the effects of this policy and how it impacted the Earth.

Policy Cycle:

- Problem Definition and Agenda Setting
 - According to the NOAA and NASA, 2016 was the hottest year on record. (<https://www.climatecentral.org/gallery/graphics/2016-was-the-hottest-year-on-record>) This came directly after the record was shattered in 2015. It is likely that this was a catalyst for the creation of FEJA. Illinois aimed to become a leader in clean energy usage. Additionally, the Renewable Portfolio Standard that was currently implemented had flaws in it. (<https://blog.ucsusa.org/jessica-collingsworth/big-win-illinois-energy>)
 -
- Legitimation
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jaIHIpZWodU>
 - There were nearly 2 years of discussion surrounding the FEJA amongst legislators, energy companies, consumer advocates, and environmental groups.
 - Consumer activists tended to have a problem with requiring
- Implementation

Government Management:

- The Act is based on managing and putting minimums of how much Clean Energy a Company can use. It also manually puts money towards creating job openings to poor communities, the elderly, and war veterans.
- Evaluation

The Good:

- FEJA is seen as a bipartisan victory by many, being a new and ambitious policy. It is accelerating the growth of renewable sources such as wind and solar energy.
- FEJA also provided funding for many low-income programs, and provided opportunity for communities in need.

The Bad:

- Obviously, coal industries, while shrinking, still exist. Therefore, there are also workers in those industries. The Act lacks much compensation for workers in the industries, as well as communities that heavily rely on these industries.
- The Clean Energy Jobs Act is currently in the works. Many people evaluate this as a better alternative to any shortcomings FEJA had.

Facilitation Notes:

Note that we skipped the formulation stage of the policy cycle because we could not find anything worthy of including.

Activism: US Youth Climate Strike (20 minutes)

Purpose:

To provide an example of a method of activism to students.

Sources:

1. <https://news.wttw.com/2019/05/03/chicago-area-students-join-global-strike-over-climate-change>

Lecture Notes:

On September 20th, 2019, around 3,000 students from around Chicago (including some IMSA students) marched around Federal Plaza to express their concern and urge action in regards to the environment. This was one of thousands of strikes all happening in conjunction around the world. They carried posters with them that read things such as, "There is No Planet B," "Change the System, Not the Climate" and "I Can't Believe I'm Marching for Facts." while chanting things such as, "People and Planet, Always Over Profit" and "Green New Deal."

This was done to reach out and get the attention of government officials and get them to take and support action on climate change. The "Green New Deal" chants refer to a large policy headed by the Green Party that aims to switch to 100% renewable energy usage by 2030, among many other things.

Senator Dick Durban spoke at the rally, shaming republicans for not taking more action with climate change. However, Dick Durban had not yet decided whether or not he supported

the Green New Deal.

The strikes were inspired by 16 year old youth activist Greta Thunberg, a 16 year old from Sweden who inspired the movement by striking from school in front of the Parliament building, with thousands of people joining her over the days. Since then she has become an international icon, speaking in front of the UN and at many panels about her involvement with the activist movement.

Activity:

Give students time to research the Green New Deal, and ask them to think about whether or not they would vote for it.

Play this video at 1.5 speed: <https://youtu.be/GxIDJWCbk6I>

Discussion (Debate)

1. Would you vote to enact the Green New Deal? Why?
2. Is the method of protesting an effective form of activism? Explain.
3. How did one person manage to inspire such a big movement?

Recommended Activities

Climate Change Videos (5 minutes)

Purpose:

To give the students a background of the topic and identify the challenges and solutions to both sides of the issue.

Materials:

<https://youtu.be/yOzAP8dtOw8>

<https://youtu.be/Os-V1fDgS-I>

Directions:

Show this at the beginning of class if you think it's needed to give context for the debate

Debate (20 minutes)

Purpose:

One of the main reasons that environmental policy struggles to be approved is because of the fact that it often clashes with the economic prosperity of our nation. The debate prompt will get minds thinking on a hot topic with environmental policy.

Materials:

Brains

Extinction Rebellion (for the radical environmental movements)

<https://rebellion.earth/act-now/> <https://youtu.be/GBaTOZMpG8g>

Directions:

The class will be divided up with one half being pro, the other half being con, and the middle being neutral. The students will be asked to pick a side based on the given prompt and to provide reasoning. They will also be expected to respectfully rebuttal statements they disagree with.

Debate Prompts:

- Do you think it's possible to have both economic prosperity and environmental sustainability? Where do you draw the line between the two?
- Do you think the media exaggerates climate change?
- Do you think the GOP exaggerates the economic cost of fighting climate change?
- Do you think that America should focus on changing it's economy to be sustainable (switching to green energy) or focus on getting international movements to switch to a sustainable energy?
- How should we combat the issue that most of the people making laws about climate change will die before America sees the severe effects of climate change?
- Is there a point where radical environmental movements go too far? Is the message important enough of cause public disruption (blocking off busy streets, refusing to leave crowded public areas, die-ins, etc.)?

Supplemental

Clean Air Act

Purpose:

Explain what the Clean Air Act is and analyze it for future use.

Sources:

2. <https://www.epa.gov/clean-air-act-overview>
3. <https://www.ametsoc.org/sloan/cleanair/cleanairlegisl.html#caa70>
4. https://www.biologicaldiversity.org/programs/climate_law_institute/global_warming_litigation/clean_air_act/index.html
5. <https://www.saveonenergy.com/what-if-there-was-no-clean-air-act/>

The Clean Air Act is a law which outlines the EPA's responsibilities for protecting the air and ozone layer. The act was passed in 1963 but the last large change in the law was enacted in 1990. The Clean Air Act of 1963 gave aid to federal research, urged the development of federal agencies, and involved the government in pollution issues. The Clean Air Act of 1970 was the one that set the foundation of the US pollution issue. It had four major components. First, it put in place standards to protect human health and the environment. Second, it determined how much pollution can be released by different industries in various areas. Third, it put in place standards to control auto emissions, encouraged states to achieve these standards.

Finally, it mandated that the plans the states formed were improved by the EPA. This act also mandated that every state must follow this policy, or the EPA would take control of administration of their laws.

More amendments were added in 1970 because they were worried that states were not following the standards due to the deterioration in air quality. After these additions, the auto industry specifically faced great issues with meeting the standards and they faced great economic hindrances and technological challenges. Specifically, this amendment targeted issues like toxic pollutants, the ozone layer, and acid rain. The Clean Air Act has the EPA set limits on certain air pollutants and the amount of them that can be utilized.

In 2009, the EPA put out a formal study which showed that greenhouse pollution does put the public's well-being at risk. They also stated that companies must obtain permits to control emissions. Then, in December of 2010, the EPA finally set limits of greenhouse gas pollution. Some states have tried to halt the implementation of these policies, but the court has denied attempts to do so.

Since its implementation, the Clean Air Act has prevented the premature death of over 400,000 people and has also prevented millions of people from contracting diseases. Since 1980, surface ozone levels have dropped by 25%; nitrogen dioxide has been reduced by 46%; and sulfur dioxide has dropped by 71%.

Activity:

Have the students go through the Policy Cycle of the Clean Air Act