



Photo by Anna Johnson

## Bright ideas at the State Capitol

The Minnesota Legislature got *a lot* done last year. In addition to passing the landmark 100% clean electricity law, they made a historic amount of clean energy and climate policies a reality. We're seeing firsthand that our elected leaders are hungry for actionable, equitable clean energy and climate policies that drive down emissions and keep Minnesota leading from the north. And Fresh Energy is deeply committed to ensuring we continue taking meaningful policy action.

**This year at the State Capitol, Fresh Energy is dedicated to working on new legislation that will ensure our state keeps up last year's momentum, while also cultivating policy solutions that take on climate change at scale.**

Already making waves and garnering bipartisan support is our clean lighting bill (Senate File 3345/House File 3326) that phases out all light bulbs that contain mercury, a well-known toxin. The Fresh Energy team and our partner from the Appliance Standards Awareness Project (pictured above) have been spending time at the Capitol testifying in support of the bill, which will allow customers have access to better, more efficient lighting technology that is safer for human health.

Bold and decisive policy action comes in many forms, including system-wide change. Fresh Energy believes a

Clean Transportation Standard (Senate File 2584/House File 2602) is one of the best tools we could activate to drive down emissions from the transportation sector — Minnesota's largest source of greenhouse gas emissions. Other states have seen successful results from similar programs, and Minnesota can, too.

This year is a bonding year, which means the Legislature will be focusing on state investments in infrastructure like public buildings, wastewater treatment plants, and transportation needs. The bonding bill will be one of the bigger policies on the move, and we are working to make sure that a large portion of it connects to our state's climate goals when it comes to energy efficiency and beyond.

**This is just a snapshot of the exciting work Fresh Energy has underway at the Capitol. Want to plug in?**

- ✓ Follow us on Instagram at **@FreshEnergyToday** or by scanning the QR below for exciting staff videos fresh from the Capitol.
- ✓ Check out session-related blogs, fact sheets, and podcasts at **fresh-energy.org**.
- ✓ Join our Action Network at **fresh-energy.org/take-action** for opportunities to speak up for clean energy and climate.



## Director's letter



Welcome to the spring edition of *Energy Matters*! As Minnesotans, we're experiencing the warmest winter in our state's recorded weather history. Every morning when I step out my door, I'm reminded why Fresh Energy's urgent work to achieve a carbon-neutral economy is so critical.

I take my role of leading this amazing organization and planning for an equitable transition to clean energy very seriously. **I wanted to let you know that we are in the midst of strategic planning to carefully evaluate the highest-leverage strategies for shaping and driving system-wide progress and change.**

Our expert staff and dedicated Board of Directors are taking a close look at where we need to be by 2040 and creating a pathway to get there, leveraging our core expertise in policy design, regulatory action, and equity-centered change. I'm excited to share details with you this fall.

**Thank you for being so connected to our work and for your continued support. It's because of you that our staff are able to do so much.**

We're proud to be one of the most called upon testifiers on energy at both the Minnesota Legislature and the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission. It's a responsibility we hold close. Our staff are able to do this all in the public interest because of your support.

*Brenda Cassellius*

Brenda Cassellius  
Executive Director

## Picturing progress



Explaining energy-related issues and policies can be tricky, but illustrations can be key to helping people understand these complex topics. That's why Fresh Energy is thrilled to partner with local illustrator Michael Iver Jacobsen. Michael's drawings are already helping us level up when it comes to explaining some of the issues we work on. You may have seen Michael's skill at work in our recent heat pump water heater blog post. And, to the left, you can get a sneak peak at the newest illustration he created to help us and our partner, Community Stabilization Project, spread public education and increase legislator awareness about the importance of electrifying outdoor equipment. Keep an eye on our blog for more of Michael's handiwork.

## Shining light on a growing challenge



One of Minnesota's biggest decarbonization challenges is hiding right beneath our feet: the gas system. In addition to our robust engagement on the regulatory front and co-launching the 40-plus-organization Clean Heat Minnesota coalition, Fresh Energy is also undertaking public education and new in-depth research into utility records. Our goal is to build upon our regulatory work by helping Minnesotans understand the short- and long-term climate and health impacts of the gas system, and how continued investments in its physical infrastructure are entrenching the problem. Over the past few months, we have published explainer blog posts, hosted webinars and podcasts, and we are excited to share a white paper soon. Stay tuned!

## Be cool, sign up for summer school!



Sharpen your #2 pencil and charge up your smartphone because this summer, you are invited to join Fresh Energy for our text-based Summer Energy School. Don't worry, there's no need to remember a locker combination. You just need to sign up for our Action Network to participate. But what does Summer Energy School entail? We will send a few texts each month this summer featuring foundational energy policies and issues like Integrated Resource Plans, hydrogen, transmission and the grid, and more. There will even be the occasional quiz! But we promise it will be fun, and everyone who participates will graduate with energy-wonk distinction. Sign up at [fresh-energy.org/enroll](https://fresh-energy.org/enroll) or scan the QR above to sign up!

**Learn more about these stories at [fresh-energy.org](https://fresh-energy.org)**

# Building a just energy transition



As the U.S. has made great progress on cutting greenhouse gas emissions in its power sector, emissions from commercial and residential buildings continue to rise. In fact, burning natural gas and propane in buildings now accounts for 14% of greenhouse gases released in the Midwest, and 79% of residential buildings in the Midwest use natural gas, propane, or wood for heat. **To reverse this trend, we need to use every tool in our toolkits to “decarbonize” our buildings — which is why Fresh Energy has been proud to incubate the critical work of the Midwest Building Decarbonization Coalition (Midwest BDC) for the past four years.**

Midwest BDC has been one of the leading groups developing and implementing equitable strategies to achieve zero emissions in the Midwest’s buildings sector by 2050 in a way that addresses the regional challenges of a cold climate. At Fresh Energy, we’re thrilled that the Midwest BDC’s critical work will continue as the coalition has officially become its own nonprofit led by Marnese Jackson as inaugural Executive Director.

The bold, equity-focused, and meaningful policy, grantmaking, and education work done by the Midwest BDC will continue to push the Midwest toward deeper decarbonization and ensure everyone in our region has access to clean, healthy, and affordable buildings.

**“Midwest BDC is not only figuring out how to equitably decarbonize buildings in the Midwest, but also to establish a just, democratic process for advocates to convene and collaborate with each other in this critical work,”** said Margaret Cherne-Hendrick, senior lead, innovation and impact at Fresh Energy. **“It’s been incredible to see how the Coalition has grown over the past four years, especially under Marnese Jackson’s leadership, and I’m excited to see where it’s headed next.”**

One key success of the Midwest BDC has been its unique sub-granting program, disbursing both Participation Stipends and Empowerment Grants on an annual funding cycle, prioritizing investment in BIPOC-led organizations and/or organizations building power in BIPOC communities.

Midwest BDC will continue to grow and establish new capacity to help decarbonize buildings equitably across the Midwest by providing funding, resources, and best practices for advocates to engage and participate in the energy transition that affects all our lives. Learn more about the Coalition and sign up for their newsletter at [midwestdecarb.org](http://midwestdecarb.org).

## Donor profile



**Wanda Davies, a wind energy developer from Roseville, champions the technical intricacies that are vital for advancing clean energy in Minnesota.** Supporting Fresh Energy as a Power Circle donor is a key way she's speeding the transition.

“I’m an energy nerd with a more-than-casual familiarity with the electric grid,” says Wanda, who has worked on all stages of wind energy development, from leasing to project management. “Details about how to add more renewables to the grid might sound boring, but it’s critical to making the clean energy transition happen quickly.”

Wanda remembers learning about Fresh Energy while volunteering on a clean energy committee: **“I was impressed with the quality of Fresh Energy’s work and their willingness to dig into complicated issues knowledgeably,”** she says.

Wanda’s unrestricted donations empower Fresh Energy to facilitate efficient grid integration and clean energy deployment to meet Minnesota’s 100% carbon-free electricity by 2040 law. In her words, “There are no easy answers to these technical problems, yet Fresh Energy is able to provide effective solutions.”

You don’t need to be an energy expert like Wanda to join us in creating a clean energy future! Contact Senior Director, Individual Giving Meggie LaValley at [lavalley@fresh-energy.org](mailto:lavalley@fresh-energy.org) to make an impact today.



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## Leading from the North

Fresh Energy is speeding Minnesota's transition to a clean energy economy, which will ensure that our region enjoys good health, a vibrant economy, and thriving communities today and for generations to come.



# Save the date for our annual Benefit Breakfast

Mark your calendars for Fresh Energy's annual Benefit Breakfast on **Wednesday, October 9, 2024!** We will be back at the RiverCentre in Saint Paul with virtual options available for those who cannot join in person. Our featured speaker will be announced soon.

**Back by popular demand!** Planning is underway for an engaging and interactive Fair of the Future that will take place before and after the program. You will not want to miss checking out this year's hottest electric vehicles, ways to electrify your home, and more.

**OCT 9**

**Saint Paul  
RiverCentre**



### How you can plug in:

- Sponsor the event or purchase a table.
- Sign up as a table captain and commit to filling a table of 10.
- Attend the event and spread the word to your network.

Contact **Meggie LaValley** at [lavalley@fresh-energy.org](mailto:lavalley@fresh-energy.org) to learn more now and stay tuned for more details soon!