



September 18, 2025

Honorable Josh Stein
Governor of North Carolina
cc: Attorney General Jeff Jackson

SUBJECT: How You Could Inspire the Nation by Contesting Duke Energy's Worsening Climate Deception

Dear Governor Stein,

As President Trump relentlessly pursues his “drill, baby, drill agenda” while our state is devastated by fatal climate-driven disasters, North Carolinians and the nation are hungry for a governor who can tackle the climate emergency with bold and transformational action. On behalf of NC WARN, Center for Biological Diversity and 71 businesses and organizations across North Carolina, we urge you to become that national climate champion and transition the state off deadly fossil fuels to affordable, resilient, and renewable energy by using every tool in your governor's toolbox.

North Carolina is ground zero for the climate and affordability emergencies on many levels. As the science has predicted, worsening storms, heat waves and catastrophic flooding events are increasingly devastating the people of eastern, western, and now central North Carolina. The state also is headquarters to Duke Energy, one of the country's – and world's – largest corporate polluters. The Charlotte-based corporation has planned a massive expansion of fossil fuel power generation. Duke Energy has compounded the climate and affordability hardships by seeking more than [\\$1 billion in residential rate increases](#) between 2023 and 2026 in the Carolinas, and Duke's investments in expensive fossil fuels and dozens of experimental nuclear plants will only drive bills even higher.

As [61 scientists](#) recently told you: ***“We implore you to lead in the transition away from fossil fuels and to the renewable, resilient, equitable, affordable, and sustainable energy future that humanity desperately needs.”***

As a member of the U.S. Climate Alliance, you are positioned to take the mantle as one of the leading climate governors in the country. However, we are concerned that your occasional [public statements](#) about North Carolina's “status as a leader in the clean energy economy” could be interpreted to echo some of the dangerously misleading messages your predecessor and Duke Energy have promoted.

We appreciate that you vetoed Senate Bill 266. But NC WARN has long criticized the original 2030/2050 “Carbon Plan” scheme as a toothless ruse, totally out of touch with climate science, and

basically a perfect greenwashing opportunity that Duke has exploited for years as the polluter keeps suppressing renewables and thwarting an honest shift to clean power. In addition, the 2050 timeframe is wildly at odds with science's demands that major reductions must finally start happening now, in the 2020s.

According to the 61 scientists, it is crucial that you take profound action to transform the state and change Duke Energy's climate-wrecking course. Those courageous experts realize that, because Duke Energy is among the world's worst climate polluters, if its leaders are persuaded or required to *genuinely* transition to renewable-based power, it could inspire global efforts to avert full-blown climate, economic and social chaos. Furthermore, the International Court of Justice recently ruled that a government's allowance of fossil fuel expansion constitutes an internationally wrongful act.

The Town of Carrboro is courageously suing Duke Energy because its top executives have helped lead a nationwide conspiracy of climate deception for decades. That deception continues to this day and has fooled many into thinking this state is on the right track.

You, as Governor, can match Carrboro's courage by breaking through the deception and helping North Carolinians understand that Duke Energy leaders *simply must* radically change their behavior if we are to help slow the climate crisis.

We urge you to take the following actions:

- 1. Declare a Climate Emergency that Displaces Fossil Fuel Generation with Affordable Renewable Energy**

In light of the climate chaos deluging the state, we urge you to declare a climate emergency and use all of your governor powers available to: (a) halt all new fossil fuel generation; and (b) replace existing fossil fuel generation with renewable energy generation. This includes using permitting authority to reject new fossil fuel expansion, amending regulations pursuant to the Emergency Management Act to boost renewable energy and distributed solar and storage deployment, and working with the NC Utilities Commission to ensure that energy decisions are made in the interest of public well-being instead of corporate profits. As you know, Duke Energy's corporate influence has long been very damaging in North Carolina.

- 2. Deploy Local Solar-Plus-Storage Systems on Critical Public Facilities for Disaster Resilience and Energy Affordability**

Local solar-plus-storage (SPS) is the [fastest, cheapest and most equitable](#) means to replace fossil fueled generation. Despite the vast unused capacity on roofs, parking areas and vacant land in or near towns and cities, Duke Energy tragically continues to block SPS growth and the countless jobs it could create in small towns and cities across North Carolina.

As an initial step, you can lead the installation of SPS on fire stations, medical facilities, buildings used as shelters during severe weather and outages and other critical public facilities. While these installations would provide multiple benefits statewide during normal conditions, we urge you to prioritize communities most vulnerable to power outages and direct climate impacts. Appendix A provides an overview of funding mechanisms and other facets of this proposal.

3. Curb the Climate and Affordability Crises from Data Centers

A similar SPS approach should be required of most new commercial and industrial facilities. Data centers – without proper regulation – are already damaging the climate and consumer pocketbooks due to their extraordinary usage of power and other resources. There are various ways to incentivize the power provider, facility developer, local government and others to maximize onsite solar power – which is cheaper than current grid price – on rooftops, parking areas, lawns and even south-facing walls. See more in Appendix B.

There are additional actions you can take to stop Duke's fossil fuel expansion and suppression of renewables, including asserting your authority over Duke Energy's corporate charter, coordinating a plan with conservative leaders who have complained about and openly discussed restructuring the monopoly electric power system, and intervening in utilities commission proceedings. Better yet, we urge you to demand a new process that is not dominated by Duke's corrosive influence.

Your leadership could help inspire other states to realize they must also directly contest the climate-wrecking actions of corporate polluters in our midst. You must be clear with the public, corporate leaders and state policy makers that the time is now for us to finally make the dramatic changes that climate scientists say we desperately need.

The technology and economics are all on the side of our state making a genuine transition to sustainable energy. We are counting on you to help North Carolina do its part to join those who are leading the effort to avert irreversible climate chaos.

Sincerely,

NC WARN

Center for Biological Diversity

Down East Coal Ash Environmental & Social
Justice Coalition

West End Revitalization Association

NC Climate Justice Collective

NC Environmental Justice Network

Nuclear Information and Resource Service

Weaver Street Realty

Sunrise Movement AVL

North Carolina Climate Solutions Coalition

Marcoplos Construction

Democracy Out Loud

Chatham Climate Action Network

It's Our Future

CG Ranch

Eno River Unitarian Universalist Fellowship

Common Ground EcoVillage Mebane NC

FACE (Fast Action on Climate to Ensure
Intergenerational Justice)

Ducharme's Piano Service

Meta Intelligence Institute

Wilmington Health
Nature Playscapes
Golden Bee
Hamilton Designs
LCOY USA (Local Conference of Youth)
The Remma Pact
Plastic-Free Provisions
Southern Harmony Designs LLC
Center for Healing Connections
LaPlaca and Associates LLC
BluEco Swaps
AGPHI (Applied Global Public Health Initiative)
Great Blue Heron Trading Co.
Forest Keeper
Friends of Big Ivy
I Heart Pisgah
Conservation Pros Inc
Santorini Art Studio
Kundalini Yoga Durham
Jungian Analytic Praxis, Inc.
ChiLiving, Inc.
Paperhand Puppet Intervention
Dragon Mountain Kung Fu
Duke Climate Coalition
7 Directions of Service
Sigma Capital

Coalition Against Racism
Solar Dynamics Inc
Reject Raytheon Asheville
Veterans For Peace - Western North Carolina
Plants Eye View Life Coaching
Sunrise Movement at the UNC-Chapel Hill
Ergonomics and Safety Please!
Durham Dispatch
Center for Progressive Reform
Haw River Assembly
350 Triangle
The John Riley Group, LLC
Silent Dayze Music
Murphy Enterprises LLC
GreenFaith
WholesomeLactationCare.com
Dayenu Triangle Circle
The Farthest Pixel
Silk Hope Catholic Worker
Evergreen Law
Pasta & Provisions, Inc
Holy Infant Catholic Church
NC APPPL
Book Babes
The Wolf's Refuge: Counseling and Healing Services PLLC.

Appendix A: Deploy Local Solar-Plus-Storage Systems on Public Facilities that are Critical During Emergencies

The following proposal is an initial step NC Governor Josh Stein can take to finally begin transitioning the state off deadly fossil fuels to affordable, resilient, and renewable energy, and to increase reliability in the face of rising storms driven by the climate emergency. We look forward to working with the Governor's office and others to develop this proposal more fully.

Due to reliability needs during emergencies, we propose that Governor Stein work with Duke Energy, local government leaders and solar and battery companies to deploy solar-plus-storage (SPS) on critical public facilities such as fire/rescue/EMS stations, emergency shelters and other public buildings. We urge prioritizing communities most vulnerable to climate and economic challenges who need these critical facilities in times of climate disasters like hurricanes as well as extreme heat.

Initial efforts should be creating these emergency centers in communities of low-income households, particularly in southeastern NC communities that have largely been left behind in development, are disproportionately communities of color, and which are frequently impacted by hurricanes and other flooding by torrential rainfalls.

Expanding SPS can greatly improve the ability of our grid to withstand and recover from storms, equipment failures and acts of malice. They provide resilience by keeping emergency facilities operational during outages, thus helping provide crucial assistance to people during times of greatest need, such as weather disasters and power outages.

SPS can also help during normal operations, feeding excess solar power onto the grid and allowing Duke Energy to routinely sell such power to neighboring homes and businesses. Public facilities with solar and batteries can also serve as the center of local microgrids. Distributed energy projects like local solar and on-site batteries can reduce reliance on transmission lines and reduce power losses caused by moving electricity across an already stressed grid.

These and other advantages reduce the need for costly new gas-fired power plants and the rate increases necessary to build them.

This is an approach that should be required of an electric power monopoly that is mandated by state statute to operate in the public interest and which is granted a guaranteed profit. It could be structured in a way that allows Duke Energy and electric cooperatives to profit by adding SPS investments to the rate system, thus allowing customer bills to go toward clean power instead of paying to build damaging and high-risk fracked gas and nuclear power plants. This approach could also be funded via various mechanisms such as state or municipal government grants or revolving loan funds. Regardless of the funding mechanism, such SPS projects would provide local green power and an invaluable resiliency service to each community.

This step could and should pave the way toward the installation of SPS on other public facilities and beyond. This is part of the [Sharing Solar proposal](#) NC WARN presented at the NC Utilities Commission in 2024. Neither the Commission nor Duke Energy engaged with the proposal in a meaningful manner.

In light of the climate emergency, we urge the Governor to engage with this proposal in earnest. Proven programs in other states show that, in various combinations, North Carolina can and must begin to rapidly install local clean energy resources and create jobs in all communities, large and small, within Duke Energy's service territories. Many fine solar companies are positioned to expand local SPS. This proposal provides options for local solar to flourish in a way that can work for those companies, Duke Energy and the people of North Carolina.

Appendix B: Curb the Climate and Affordability Crises from Data Centers

The following proposal outlines steps NC Governor Josh Stein should take to protect our state from the influx of data centers and other large facilities (including for crypto-mining) which are enormously energy- and water-intensive, especially given the enormous amount of questionable hype around what has now been identified as the “[AI bubble](#).” We look forward to working with the Governor’s office and others to develop this proposal more fully.

We urge Governor Stein to set significant guardrails on data centers and other large power-using facilities to protect North Carolinians and the environment. On-site solar, renewables, and batteries should be required of new (and existing) data centers and other large power users, particularly because many data centers and AI facilities provide very few permanent jobs – compared to a higher number of construction jobs used by proponents to mislead policymakers and the public. If these facilities are built, they should maximize solar power on rooftops, parking areas, lawns and south-, west- and east-facing walls.

Additional guardrails should include:

- (i) requiring a public interest test at the state and respective local government levels to assess whether and how the data center serves the public interest, which includes assessing (a) the degree to which these data centers will increase electricity demand and drive rate increases to build the infrastructure to meet the new demand; (b) the environmental impacts including water usage and electricity buildout through which types of energy; (c) the societal purpose of the data center or technology infrastructure; (d) the jobs impacts and other economic impacts to the state or local economy. Such a test should inform permitting decisions, as well as decisions on whether any public subsidies should be offered to them;
- (ii) requiring that any approved large electricity users be powered first by on-site SPS, and that any additional generation necessary be powered by nearby responsibly-sited solar power or wind arrays of moderate scale close to the proposed site(s) to avoid driving new transmission construction;
- (iii) requiring that such corporations invest their own money in the new generation as a portion of the overall investment, particularly because it will provide among the greatest economic returns and not be passed onto ratepayers;
- (iv) requiring that the costs of providing power not be subsidized by other customers as has been typical in North Carolina’s past but are borne directly by the data center or technology company; and
- (iv) requiring transparency measures so that data centers must disclose electricity usage, water usage, environmental impacts, and greenhouse gas and other pollutant emissions.

Such measures are appropriate because most of these types of facilities already gain various public-funded incentives through taxes, grants, roads and more. Other funding mechanisms for these on-site SPS projects could include a clean energy tax on Duke Energy shareholders.

The Governor’s economic development team could help educate potential facility owners so that new corporate investments in North Carolina are truly part of a workable coupling of climate and economic strategies that protect rates for all customers.