

## **The View from the Capitol**

*[This piece originally appeared in the North Haven Courier.]*

by State Representative Steve Fontana

On my NHTV show “Politics & People”, I recently interviewed officials from the Connecticut Clean Energy Fund (CCEF) about several initiatives that they are pursuing to encourage the use of renewable energy.

The CCEF promotes the supply of, and demand for, renewable or “clean” energy. Clean energy, unlike energy from fossil fuels, produces little or no pollution, because it comes from sources like the sun, the wind, and byproducts of everyday life (such as gas from landfills). Since these sources are plentiful, we can generate lots of clean energy without worrying that we will run out of them. And, since we can generate this energy here in Connecticut, we can use it to become less dependent on increasingly expensive and volatile foreign energy sources.

To create new clean energy supplies, the CCEF focuses on two initiatives: 1) promoting “distributed generation” technology, and 2) supporting renewable energy projects.

“Distributed generation” involves generating electricity A) where it is needed most, B) based on the amount of demand in that particular location, and C) less expensively than oversized, centrally-located power plants. The CCEF promotes distributed generation by providing incentives to buy equipment such as photovoltaic cells that produce electricity.

The CCEF also is developing clean energy sources by promulgating “Project 100”: a plan to create, here in Connecticut, one hundred megawatts of renewable energy over the next four years. These megawatts, from solar, wind, landfill gas, or biomass installations, will diversify our sources of electricity (now mainly oil, natural gas, and nuclear energy).

Over the next few months, the CCEF will review various renewable energy proposals, and then help secure financing and long-term contracts for the best of them. United Illuminating (UI) then will buy electricity that these projects generate to meet its “renewable portfolio standard”: the amount of electricity that we require utilities to provide from renewable sources.

To promote clean energy demand, the CCEF focuses on two other initiatives: 1) fostering adoption of clean energy options, and 2) securing local involvement in a “Clean Communities” program.

To support consumption of clean energy, the CCEF is making selecting clean energy alternatives easier for consumers. Starting this month, your UI bill should have an insert alerting you to two companies that, for as little as two or three dollars more a month, will ensure that your electricity comes from renewable sources. If you elect for your power to

come from one of these sources, you will help to develop clean energy production in the Northeast, thus reducing our reliance on fossil fuels that degrade our air quality.

Finally, the CCEF supports clean energy demand by helping towns to join its “Clean Communities” program (roughly ten or eleven communities already have joined the program; Orange is the latest). If a town commits to using twenty percent renewable energy by 2010, it then may receive FREE solar panels for its buildings.

For instance, North Haven, if it chose to join this program, would be eligible for a two-kilowatt photovoltaic system for every one hundred homes that signed up for the clean energy options program on their bill. If a couple thousand families in town signed up, North Haven could receive free solar electricity units to help power its new high school, saving us money by reducing our town’s electricity bill! I am scheduled to sit down with local officials to discuss whether North Haven should participate in this program.

To find out more about the CCEF and its programs, please feel free to contact me, or to visit the CCEF’s website at [www.ctcleanenergy.com](http://www.ctcleanenergy.com).