

## {SCIENCE AT WORK}

### Pushing Back against ALEC

Emboldened by the results of the November elections, the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC) is doubling down on its anti-environment agenda.

At the secretive business lobby group's December conference in Washington, DC, more than 400 state lawmakers and industry representatives formulated sample bills and resolutions that would, among other things, weaken the Endangered Species Act, tie the hands of states that seek to cut carbon pollution through innovative policies, and block the EPA's proposed standard for ground-level ozone pollution.

**Most of ALEC's energy-related efforts have been foiled so far.**

But UCS is fighting back. A day before ALEC convened its conference, we joined more than 100 national, state, and grassroots organizations to issue a joint letter urging ALEC's legislator members to reject the group's agenda, end their affiliation, and encourage their colleagues to do so as well.

Since its inception in 1973, ALEC—which boasts approximately 1,800 state legislators and more than 200 businesses, trade associations, corporate law firms, and nonprofits as members—has been quietly disseminating sample state

(continued on page 2)

## {IDEAS IN ACTION}

### UCS Calls for a National Food Policy



UCS is leading the call for the U.S. government to adopt a national food policy that will help ensure all Americans have access to healthy, nutritious, and affordable food.

In a pathbreaking opinion piece in the *Washington Post* last fall, UCS Food and Environment Program Director and Senior Scientist Ricardo Salvador joined prominent food thinkers Mark Bittman, Michael Pollan, and Olivier de Schutter in calling on President Obama to establish a national food policy. Since then, the idea has been endorsed by a growing number of scientists, food activists, legislators, journalists, and business and labor leaders.

Why do we need a national food policy? For one thing, the way we produce and consume food has a bigger impact on our health and well-being than any other activity. Consider, for instance, that the food industry is the largest sector of the U.S. economy. Or that our fossil fuel-dependent food and agriculture system is responsible for significant global warming emissions.

Equally important is the mounting evidence that our food system and the diet it encourages are causing incalculable damage to Americans' health—including hundreds of thousands of preventable deaths each year. In just one key example, American children are expected to live shorter lives than their parents largely because a third of them will develop Type 2 diabetes, a preventable disease linked to obesity.

#### **INCOHERENT, PIECEMEAL POLICIES**

Meanwhile, our government's policies related to food are made piecemeal, under the oversight of eight separate federal agencies. Amid this incoherence, special interests thrive and the public good suffers.

The contradictions of these policies become clear as soon as you compare the federal recommendations for the American diet, known as MyPlate, with the federal

(continued on back page)

# Hope outside Congress



© Richard Howard

With the new U.S. Congress focused on misguided priorities such as the Keystone XL pipeline (which would transport oil

derived from highly polluting tar sands in Canada), the Union of Concerned Scientists is increasing its engagement with state governments—where so much meaningful climate action is already taking place.

This summer, when the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency finalizes federal rules to limit carbon dioxide pollution from our nation’s power plants, states will have two to three years to submit implementation plans. We are taking advantage of this opportunity by launching our “Power Ahead” campaign to win clean energy victories in key states across the country.

Using the effective local advocacy networks we have built up through our climate impacts work, we will deliver strong, targeted analyses to convince state leaders of the tremendous benefits of renewable energy and energy efficiency. And, with substantive victories at the state level, we hope to build a groundswell of support for a much-needed national climate change strategy.

Of course, we’re still actively engaged at the federal level and we will work hard to make progress while fighting off bad bills that would set us back. But if Congress remains stuck on ill-conceived projects such as Keystone, UCS will make positive change by being more focused at the state level than ever before.

KEN KIMMELL

## FAST FACTS

### How Cleaner Trucks Can Save Money—and Protect the Climate



© Don Anstie

With the federal government working to develop new fuel economy and global warming emissions standards for trucks, we have a unique opportunity to cut oil use dramatically and address climate change. It’s an under-the-radar issue with huge potential benefits. Consider that:

- Almost everything we use comes to us by truck—which means shipping fuel is part of the cost of everything we buy.
- Trucks make up just 7 percent of vehicles on U.S. roads, but consume 25 percent of the fuel used on those roads.

- Heavy-duty trucks average six miles per gallon, a figure that has remained stubbornly low since the 1970s, but we have the technology to make big improvements. UCS analysis shows that, by 2025, we can make new trucks 40 percent more efficient compared with 2010 levels.
- Our study of five major U.S. truck fleets (Coca-Cola, FedEx, Pepsi, UPS, Walmart) shows that strong new standards can reduce the fuel usage of these fleets alone by 500 million gallons a year.

UCS is pushing industry and government agencies to support a strong new efficiency and global warming emissions standard for trucks, and the Obama administration is expected to issue a draft rule in March. It’s good for consumers and vital for the climate.

## Pushing Back against ALEC

(continued from front page)

legislation hostile to clean energy. For example, according to the Center for Media and Democracy, 31 ALEC-sponsored bills introduced in state legislatures last year sought to roll back or repeal state standards requiring

***You can help push more companies, including Shell Oil, to sever their ties to ALEC.***

utilities to increase their use of renewable energy—standards that UCS has worked hard to implement and support.

Thanks to UCS members working in concert with other organizations,

most of ALEC’s energy-related efforts have been foiled so far. And our efforts to bring ALEC’s agenda to light are working. Last fall, for example, more than 5,000 UCS members sent messages to Facebook’s energy efficiency and sustainability manager noting ALEC’s efforts to thwart clean energy. Shortly thereafter, the company ended its membership. Other technology firms, including Microsoft, Yahoo, and Yelp, also quit ALEC, as did Occidental Petroleum, which bowed to pressure from shareholders. Now UCS members are calling on Shell Oil to live up to its stated support for addressing climate change by severing its ties to ALEC. Join the effort by clicking on “Take Action” at [www.ucsusa.org](http://www.ucsusa.org).

## ASK THE SCIENTIST

**Will states decide how to meet the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Clean Power Plan requirements? And, if states are retiring coal plants, how should they compensate for all the lost power?**

—K. Thaw, Boston, MA



© Sanjay Suchak

**Steve Clemmer**, director of energy research and analysis for the UCS Climate and Energy Program, responds:

The Clean Power Plan—scheduled to go into effect this summer—will, for the first time, limit carbon dioxide emissions from existing power plants, which are responsible for nearly

40 percent of total U.S. global warming pollution. The plan sets targets for each state, giving the states as long as 15 years to implement their plans and the flexibility to choose among many proven methods for curbing emissions.

The quickest, safest, and most affordable way to replace coal-fired plants would be to boost energy efficiency investments and dramatically increase electricity generated by wind, solar, and other renewable energy technologies. Natural gas will also play a role in the short term, but given its price volatility and the fact that gas-fired plants emit carbon dioxide and leak methane—an even more potent heat-trapping gas—we can't afford to significantly increase our reliance on it.

The EPA plan aims to reduce electricity sector emissions 30 percent below 2005 levels by 2030. UCS analysis shows the agency could

***The best way to replace coal-fired power plants is to boost energy efficiency and electricity generated by renewable resources such as wind and solar power.***

achieve 40 percent reductions by nearly doubling its renewable energy targets, which would have a negligible impact on electricity prices and would lower natural gas prices. For more information, visit [www.ucsusa.org/renewablesandcleanpowerplan](http://www.ucsusa.org/renewablesandcleanpowerplan).

## VISUALIZING THE DATA

### THE NUMBER OF HOUSEHOLDS WITH ROOFTOP SOLAR IS SKYROCKETING

**2006**

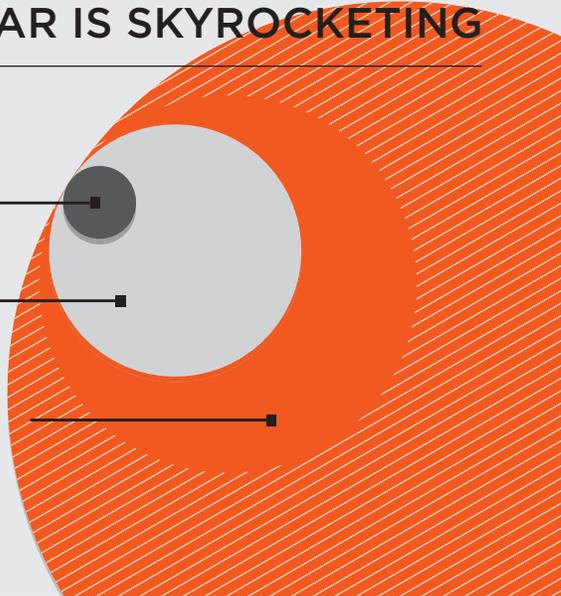
30,000 homes

**2013**

400,000 homes

**2020 projections**

900,000–3.8 million homes



Solar power is a clean energy solution that produces no global warming pollution. Be part of the solution at [www.ucsusa.org/solarrevolution](http://www.ucsusa.org/solarrevolution).

NOTE: PROJECTIONS ASSUME 5 KILOWATTS PER HOUSE; U.S. DOE ANNUAL ENERGY OUTLOOK 2014 AND SUNSHOT VISION STUDY (2012) DATA.

## THANKS, PARTNER

We wanted to take a moment to thank the more than 6,500 UCS members who, as part of our Partners for the Earth program, support our work with automatic monthly gifts through their bank account or credit card. If you would like to join this community of donors that plays such a vital role in sustaining our efforts, please visit [www.ucsusa.org/pfe](http://www.ucsusa.org/pfe) or call our membership department at (800) 666-8276.

# UCS Calls for a National Food Policy

(continued from front page)

government's agricultural policies. While MyPlate recommends a diet of 50 percent vegetables and fruits, the federal government devotes less than 1 percent of farm subsidies to support the research, production, and marketing of these foods. Conversely, more than 60 percent of farm subsidies support the production of corn and other grains—food that is mostly fed to animals, converted to vehicle fuel, or processed into precisely the sort of junk food the government urges us to avoid.

How can one government advance two such diametrically opposed goals? By failing to recognize that an agricultural policy is not the same as a food policy—and that the former does not

***Government policies related to food are made piecemeal, under the oversight of eight separate federal agencies. This incoherence allows special interests to thrive and causes the public good to suffer.***

necessarily contribute to public health. Even worse, many U.S. agricultural policies were developed decades ago and are now obsolete and counterproductive, providing billions in public support to an industry that churns out a surfeit of unhealthy calories while simultaneously undermining the ability of farmers to make a living from their land.

## A NEW VISION

So what might a national food policy look like? Among other things, it ought to ensure that public dollars are spent to serve the following goals:

- all Americans have access to healthy food;
- farm policies are designed to support public health and environmental objectives;

- our food supply is free of toxic bacteria, chemicals, and drugs;
- production and marketing of food are done transparently;
- the food industry pays a fair wage to those it employs; and
- the food system's carbon footprint is reduced and the amount of carbon sequestered on farmland is increased.

In short, the policy would ensure that all Americans have access to food that is nutritious, affordable, and produced in a fair and sustainable way.

## JOIN THE CONVERSATION

### Tell President Obama: It's Time for a National Food Policy

For decades, UCS has been a leader in demonstrating the costs of diet-related disease, the environmental toll of industrial agriculture, and the iron grip corporate giants have on information about what we eat.

Now we're helping to lead the way forward with a call for a national food policy, and you can join our efforts.

Right now, UCS is calling on President Obama to do something bold and necessary: issue an executive order establishing a national food policy. We know change doesn't happen overnight. But right now, the real work must begin—with you.

Sign the petition today to tell President Obama that you want a national food policy that will transform our food system to ensure healthy, sustainably grown food for all. Take action at [www.ucsusa.org/action](http://www.ucsusa.org/action).

**Union of Concerned Scientists**  
Science for a healthy planet and safer world



FIND THIS ISSUE ONLINE: [www.ucsusa.org/earthwise](http://www.ucsusa.org/earthwise)

*The Union of Concerned Scientists puts rigorous, independent science to work to solve our planet's most pressing problems. Joining with citizens across the country, we combine technical analysis and effective advocacy to create innovative, practical solutions for a healthy, safe, and sustainable future.*

## EARTHWISE

A quarterly publication of the Union of Concerned Scientists. Articles from *Earthwise*, duly acknowledged, may be reprinted free of charge.

## PRODUCTION

Seth Shulman, **Editorial Director**  
Bryan Wadsworth, **Managing Editor**  
Heather Tuttle, **Production Manager**  
Rigsby Hull, **Design**

## NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS

Two Brattle Square  
Cambridge, MA 02138-3780  
Phone: (617) 547-5552  
Fax: (617) 864-9405

© MARCH 2015  
UNION OF CONCERNED SCIENTISTS

♻️ PRINTED ON 100% POST-CONSUMER  
RECYCLED PAPER USING VEGETABLE-BASED INKS

WEB: [www.ucsusa.org](http://www.ucsusa.org)  
EMAIL: [ucs@ucsusa.org](mailto:ucs@ucsusa.org)