



# Interfaith Statement on Energy & Equity

Alabama Interfaith Power & Light urges you to sign and share the following statement regarding faith, energy, and equity. We plan to deliver all signatures to Alabama's elected leaders at the start of the 2020 legislative session in Montgomery. Learn more here: <http://bit.ly/ALIPL-IEES>

## Statement:

1. We believe that it is immoral for anyone to bear a disproportionate burden of toxic health effects from waste and pollution.
2. We believe that clean, affordable, renewable energy is a holy goal worthy of pursuit by people of all faiths.
3. We believe that our individual and societal energy choices – renewable versus non-renewable, equitable versus non-equitable – should be an expression of our individual faiths.

## My authorized signature represents:

- An individual or family
- A faith-based congregation
- Another multi-member organization or institution

**I am authorized to represent how many individuals? (Your family, congregation, or institution member count:)**

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**My authorized signature:**

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## Background

### Energy Equity

According to Interfaith Power & Light, “energy equity” is when all people can access safe and affordable energy, and the health and well-being of all communities are protected—equitably—throughout the energy production and use process.

Unfortunately, the most vulnerable members of our communities are being hurt first and worst by our energy choices. The poorest members of our communities often have the highest “energy burden,” that is, they pay the largest amount of their budget for energy and suffer the most negative health effects from energy-related pollution. Our faith traditions call to us to reduce the burden on our neighbors by reducing our own use of energy that causes pollution and by transitioning to safe, clean, and affordable energy. The good news is, there are equitable pathways forward, and our faith communities can lead the way to a brighter future.

### Air Pollution and Human Health

According to the Union of Concerned Scientists, “Air pollution from coal-fired power plants is linked with asthma, cancer, heart and lung ailments, neurological problems, acid rain, global warming, and other severe environmental and public health impacts.” Wind and solar power do not pollute the air—or our lungs—and the energy is provided to us freely every day by our life-giving sun.

### The Energy-Water Connection

According to the Union of Concerned Scientists, on average, U.S. power plants use as much water in one minute for cooling as the amount of water flowing over Niagara Falls in one minute. Our nation’s thermoelectric power plants, which include both fossil fuel-burning and nuclear plants, collectively use as much water as all U.S. farms, and four times as much water as all U.S. households. Water holds a sacred role in many faith traditions, and the fact that many of Alabama’s waterways are listed as impaired—“303(d)” federal designation—or have fish consumption advisories is evidence that we are not practicing our faith when it comes to protecting the life-giving rivers and streams of Alabama. As we were drafting this statement, AL.com reported that “Alabama Power Company has agreed to pay \$222,046 in damages and penalties for a chemical spill and fish kill in March about 30 miles northwest of Birmingham. The spill happened near the company’s coal-fired power plant on the Mulberry Fork of the Black Warrior River.” Wind and solar power do not require water for cooling, nor do they endanger our rivers and streams with mercury and dozens of other toxic by-products from burning coal.

### Climate Disruption

According to *Scientific American*, the link between human activities and global warming is as conclusive as the link between smoking and lung cancer. Every major scientific organization worldwide agrees with the consensus of scientists who actively study the climate and who have concluded that (1) climate disruption is a serious threat, (2) that it is happening now, and (3) that humans are responsible. According to *Scientific American*, “Burning fossil fuels to produce electricity or heat is responsible for roughly half of global warming pollution.”

All faiths place an emphasis on the importance of truth. Scientists have provided overwhelming evidence that humans are driving climate disruption. The truth is that climate disruption is real, and we have an opportunity to affect change. As people of faith, we are called to be change agents. Science informs us; faith moves us.

## Renewable Energy

The sun radiates more energy in one second than people have used since the beginning of time, and every day enough solar energy falls on the U.S. alone to power our energy needs for one and a half years. The sun also drives other sources of renewable energy, such as wind and water flows. Residual heat within the earth provides renewable geothermal energy.

Scientists have stated one of the leading contributors to the climate crisis is fossil fuels. Some coal proponents have argued that “God placed coal here for us to use, so we should use it.” Evidence shows that the burning of coal is a major reason for the rise in fish consumption advisories for many of Alabama’s rivers and lakes. The toxic ash left behind from burning coal has been dumped in Alabama. We stand with our Indigenous community in saying, “Keep coal in the ground.”

Just as there is coal and other fossil fuels that can be mined and burned, there are clean and renewable alternative energy sources that simply need to be harvested. Our signature indicates that we see a moral imperative to address energy inequity and the toxic effects of fossil fuels, which tear at the fabric of this great state. We support the vision of 100% Renewable Energy Equity as an act of our faith.

## Links

- [303\(d\) \[Alabama Impaired Waterways\] Information and Map](#)
- [Alabama Fish Consumption Advisories 2019 \(PDF\)](#)
- [Alabama Power agrees to pay \\$222K over fish kill north of Birmingham](#)
- [Alabama Rivers Alliance Fish Consumption Guide](#)
- [Climate Change 101](#)
- [Climate Risks as Conclusive as Link between Smoking and Lung Cancer](#)
- [Coal and Air Pollution](#)
- [Freshwater Use by U.S. Power Plants](#)
- [How to Solve Global Warming: It's the Energy Supply](#)
- [Interfaith Power & Light](#)
- [Pope Francis' Encyclical Resources](#)
- [Religious Statements on Climate Change](#)
- [Scientific Consensus: Earth's Climate is Warming](#)
- [Scientists Agree: Global Warming is Happening and Humans are the Primary Cause](#)
- [What not to eat: Alabama's 2019 fish consumption advisories](#)