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Ireland Biomethane Conference 2022

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Clondarf Castle, Ireland

**Transatlantic Collaboration:**

**Shared Challenges & Shared Solutions**

* I am extremely honored to be here this afternoon at Clondarf Castle, and so grateful for the opportunity to address such a prestigious group of leaders in government and industry.
* I would like to extend my profound appreciation to:
	+ The Renewable Gas Forum Ireland (RGFI)
	+ RGFI CEO PJ McCarthy
	+ RGFI Chair JP Prendergast
	+ And all the esteemed leaders joining us here today.
* When it comes to our clean energy future, Biomethane represents a truly sustainable climate solution, and a critical piece of the puzzle – especially for “difficult to decarbonize” sectors.
* This industry has the ability to empower agricultural economies by engaging participants at every level – from major corporations and investors, all the way to individual contractors and local farmers.
* Although the primary pathway for American biogas has historically been landfill gas collection, manure-based anaerobic digesters in the United States have reduced emissions by 54.4 million metric tons of CO2 equivalent since the year 2000 (EPA).
* Agricultural biomethane now more than ever represents a major opportunity in the United States where, according to the USDA, domestic livestock markets are responsible for *almost one-third* of our country’s methane emissions.
* Our leaders in government - both here in the E.U., and in the U.S. – have recently begun to demonstrate the political will needed to address the existential crisis before us.
* For many years in the United States, the only climate policy progress we could rely on took place at the subnational - or “state” - level.
* As a state legislator, I am extremely proud to have authored and sponsored the Global Warming Solutions Act of 2008 - our state’s original greenhouse gas emission reduction law.
* I am also extremely proud to have co-sponsored legislation successfully passed last session upgrading the Global Warming Solutions Act, which now requires Massachusetts to achieve Net Zero emissions by 2050.
* And I am extremely pleased to report from across the pond that this past summer, after years of advocacy for federal climate action, the United States Congress has finally passed a major piece of climate legislation.
* The Inflation Reduction Act of 2022 includes a comprehensive collection of clean energy incentives, tax credits, earmarks, and grant resources providing both immediate support for renewables and long-term certainty for investors (*Investment Tax Credit*).
* As part of this landmark legislation, the U.S. federal government has committed to investing $369 Billion in climate and environmental solutions.
* The importance of these resources and the political will our respective leaders in government have recently shown cannot be overstated.
* At this very moment, the wheels of democracy throughout the world are turning.
* In the United States, voters throughout the country are in the process of determining their political representatives in the Midterm Elections.
* Regardless of the outcome, I am extremely confident that the Biden-Harris Administration will remain committed to the federal climate progress accomplished this summer.
* In order to achieve our new Net Zero Emission standards in Massachusetts and Europe, and establish emission standards in other regions, this newfound momentum cannot waver.
* We can expect voters will continue to demand climate action and political accountability.
* As former U.S. Vice President Al Gore told former Secretary of State John Kerry - now Special Presidential Envoy for Climate - before a Yale University audience in 2017:

 “Political will is itself a renewable resource. Go out and renew it.”

* At this very moment, more than 90 heads of state and representatives from 190 countries are attending the United Nations Climate Change Conference of the Parties – COP27 – in Egypt.
* With robust national resources backing the clean energy transition and long-term emission reduction commitments now in place, the climate movement currently has more support from government leaders than ever before.
* This is truly an historic moment for climate action.
* But in the wake of this recent progress, the more difficult task that lies ahead will be “the *how”*.
* What I’d like to emphasize to everyone here today is this: despite recent commitments to long-term progress, our work has really just begun:

*Now* comes the practical implementation of measures needed to expand clean energy and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

* We can achieve great progress, and we *can* succeed, by working together.
* Going forward, we will need to provide improved research and substantive data.
* Accurate information inspires greater confidence in the decarbonization solutions that are put forth.
* This is especially true in calculating the cost of embodied carbon and the cost of inaction when it comes to the worst effects of our global climate emergency.
* By accounting for these associated costs, we can provide a more accurate perspective on the benefits of biomethane and other sustainable solutions.
* With carbon and climate inaction factored into the equation, there is no doubt clean energy is an imperative cost-saving measure.
* But in order to bring about change, we must get this information in the hands of decisionmakers in a format they can digest as soon as possible.
* The tools and technology we need to provide this information are all around us, and improving by the day.
* Achieving our climate goals will also demand a skilled, 21st-Century workforce capable of implementing clean energy solutions on a more robust scale.
* Professionals employed by the fossil fuel industry must be proactively engaged in ways that leverage their valuable experience for our clean energy future.
* Our Higher Education - and even Secondary Education - institutions must be prepared to provide their students the meaningful knowledge and skills needed to fuel our clean energy future.
* Employment directly associated with the dirty fossil fuel industry has already begun to fail.
* Under the former U.S. President’s administration, our national failure to put forth informed pandemic policies and embrace clean energy sector opportunities was on full display.
* During the Biden-Harris Administration, on the other hand, the United States economy recovered by adding a record-setting 10 million jobs – over 250,000 in the last month alone.
* Going forward, long-term population changes will also present daunting workforce challenges.
* Workforce population rates in the United States and Europe are for the most part in the midst of historic decreases.
* In the future, maintaining an adequate labor pool will require more thoughtful strategies than simply providing better access to skills and training.
* Immigration is yet another facet of the modern workforce puzzle national leaders have yet to begin to unpack.
* In the United States, the most recent comprehensive Immigration Reform bill passed by Congress was signed into law by President Ronald Regan in 1986 – 36 years ago.
* The literally countless individuals residing in and seeking entry to the United States and other countries without official approval `realistic options for gaining legal status.
* Going forward, the modernization of our 21st-Century workforce will depend heavily on the successful modernization of our immigration policies.
* Considering the magnitude of the challenges we face, one thing is clear: if we were looking for reasons *not* to address these challenges, we would have every excuse to retreat!
* The good news is, the expansion of the clean energy economy is not just a solution to our global climate emergency – it is an invaluable business opportunity for industrial leaders throughout the world.
* There is no greater misconception perpetuated by the fossil fuel industry than the contention that we have to choose between our economy and our climate progress.
* As Bill Clinton recently explained,

“This is a false choice.  *Not* fighting climate change costs us money every single day.

Dollar for dollar, investments in clean energy and energy efficiency create more jobs than doubling down on fossil fuels. Investing in wind creates 1.2 times as many jobs, 1.5 times as many for solar, and 2.8 times as many for building retrofits. Clean energy is expected to be a $6 trillion dollar industry by 2030.”

* And throughout our world, clean energy has become more affordable than traditional combustion sources.
* In Massachusetts, the levelized cost of energy from our first large-scale offshore wind farm Vineyard Wind came in at 6.5 cents per kilowatt hour – a price estimated to save electricity customers $1.4 billion over the next 20 years.
* Our next 800 MW project, Mayflower Wind, came in at 5.8 cents per kilowatt hour.
* Beyond low, competitive electricity costs, these initiatives will have a variety of additional benefits to the local economy - including the addition of thousands of good-paying jobs and robust supply chain related business activity.
* Yet *another* falsehood perpetuated by the fossil fuel industry is that the clean energy transition is responsible for global inflation.
* The opposite is true.
* In reality, global inflation has been brought on by the effects of the pandemic and the ongoing campaign of military aggression by Russia directed at Ukraine…
* A geopolitical conflict largely motivated by scarcity and demand in the international market for traditional, fossil-fuel-based energy.
* Beyond the benefits previously discussed, clean energy is also the key to energy security and economic independence.
* As Al Gore recently said at the New York Times *Forward Conversation Forum*:

“Renewable energy is *Freedom*Energy.”

* By building an alliance of democratic allies, international collaboration is an indispensable strategy for severing our dependence on fossil fuels and unstable autocratic regimes.
* The ongoing climate crisis is a *shared* problem.
* Although its impact may be felt disproportionately, the ultimate end cost of our inaction will be far too high for any one person, city, corporation, or country to bear.
* Shared problems demand shared solutions and opportunities for cooperation are all around us.
* Collaboration has been a major key to our efforts and progress thus far in the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions.
* In Massachusetts, for example, offshore wind has become a significant component of our decarbonization roadmap with three procurements and 2800 megawatts currently under contract.
* Years before our state began its first solicitation, however, I ventured to Denmark with a number of my colleagues in the legislature in order to see an operational offshore wind farm in action.
* I remain convinced that this international visit - which gave policymakers an in-person look at this critical, innovative clean energy solution – was a watershed moment for the offshore wind industry in Massachusetts and the United States.
* As leaders in the bioeconomy, I would like to personally urge you to seize these valuable opportunities to collaborate across geographic borders.
* We in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts have ambitious climate mandates in law and broad decarbonization strategies in place.
* Nevertheless, complying with our emission reduction requirements going forward will be extremely difficult to do on our own and we have much to learn from all of you.
* In an ever-evolving 21st-Century economy, an open dialogue about best practices and strategies is the best way to successfully ensure we avoid the worst effects of climate change.
* Unfortunately, we no longer have the luxury of allowing this exchange to take place gradually (\*As Secretary Guterres said earlier this week, “We are on a highway to climate hell with our foot on the accelerator.”)
* By openly communicating about best practices and strategizing together, international allies at every level of government have valuable opportunities to advance our regional clean energy economy.
* In order to help bring together the various critical interested parties, I am very pleased today to inform you all about an initiative I announced at the UN Oceans Conference 2022 this summer in Matoshinos, Portugal:
* **The Transatlantic Alliance For Climate Action.**
* The Transatlantic Alliance For Climate Action will be a private non-profit NGO foundation aimed at accomplishing the imperative goal of informing best practices for climate policy solutions.
* It is an alliance of clean energy sector developers & innovators, leading scientific & academic experts, legislators & policymakers, climate advocates, & community voices - brought together to inform and enact bold climate solutions.
* The central mission is to empower the creation of public/private partnerships to successfully achieve rapid, region-wide decarbonization, secure a sustainable future, and prevent the worst effects of our global climate emergency.
* Throughout my tenure as a policymaker and climate advocate, I am extremely fortunate to have seized the opportunity to collaborate with a variety groups and leaders across the world to further climate action:
	+ In Canada, Portugal, Denmark, the Netherlands, Sweden, Austria, Switzerland, Germany, the UK, and, of course, here in Ireland.
	+ In my capacity as Founding Chair of the CSG U.S. State Legislative Climate Alliance, I have recently engaged networks of experts throughout the Atlantic coastal region to discuss opportunities to contribute to this new initiative.
	+ Since announcing the establishment of the Transatlantic Alliance in Portugal at the UN Oceans Conference this summer, I have been extremely humbled by the tremendous positive feedback and interest I have received.
	+ I would like to invite all those who might be interested in participating to reach out.
	+ I thank you all for your time and for your attention.
	+ And I thank you all in advance for your willingness to collaborate, to be genuine leaders in the effort to help resolve this crisis, and secure the advantages of a clean energy economy now within our grasp.