**TOPIC: The US should phase out fossil fuels quickly**

**PRO**

**1 PRO: Case and Contentions** (2nd and 3rd Pro speakers defend these arguments)

**My partners and I support the following topic: The US should phase out fossil fuels quickly**

**We define “fossil fuels” as:** “carbon-rich deposits that are extracted and burned for non-renewable energy. There are three types of fossil fuel – coal, oil and gas.” (Client Earth). Fossil fuels are used in cars, your home, and almost everywhere in our country.

**We define “phasing out” as:** transitioning away from using one thing to use something else. In this case that means using less fossil fuels and using more green energy like solar and wind power.

**Contention 1: Global Warming**

**World is Bad: Fossil fuels are the biggest cause global warming**

* When fossil fuels are burned for energy, they release large amounts of carbon dioxide (CO2), a greenhouse gas, into the air. Greenhouse gases trap heat in our atmosphere, causing global warming. Climate Analytics reports that global temperatures have increased by 33 degrees hotter since the year 1900.
* The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has found that emissions from fossil fuels are the biggest cause of global warming. In the year 2018, 89 percent of global CO2 emissions came from the fossil fuel industry. The IPCC warns that fossil fuel emissions must be cut in half within 10 years, otherwise global warming will be very harmful.

**Topic Solves: Phasing out fossil fuels quickly is necessary to prevent more warming**

* If the United States acted quickly to reduce our use of fossil fuels it would greatly reduce our country’s contribution to global warming. According to the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the largest source of greenhouse gas emissions from human activities in the United States is from burning fossil fuels for electricity, heat, and transportation.
* The New York Times reports that the US has been the country that has contributed the most to global warming since the Industrial Revolution in the early 1900s. Even though countries like China and Russia pollute similar amounts now, the US has more responsibility to lead the world in cutting out fossil fuels first and should act quickly so the world will follow.

**Impact: Global warming is dangerous and can’t be undone**

* According to Client Earth, if the planet keeps getting hotter it will cause many environmental problems. A warmer planet will melt icebergs which raises sea levels which will slowly destroy cities and towns near the oceans like Seattle. It will also cause extreme weather that makes it harder to grow food, resulting in more hunger. This would make our country’s health and economy suffer.
* NASA also reports that global warming can cause new pests and diseases to emerge, affecting plants, animals, and humans. With COVID-19 already affecting the world so much, more issues like this will make food safety and human health worse.
* Overall, a world of global warming looks like a world where there are more natural disasters, less food, and less places to live which means billions of people around the world would suffer.

**Contention 2: Oil Spills**

**World is Bad: Fossil fuels regularly cause pollution across the country**

* Fossil fuels have direct and indirect costs. Direct costs are how much money we pay to use fossil fuels, like putting gas in a car. But the indirect costs are much more. According to the Union of Concerned Scientists, the hidden costs of fossil fuels are the serious impacts to our health and environment such as pollution and the damage to our lands and water.
* Greenpeace reports that beyond global warming, the use of fossil fuels also pollutes our air quality and sources of water, like oceans, lakes, and rivers. Burning fossil fuels contaminates the air, and has been linked to increased health risks among those exposed. And digging up and transporting fossil fuels has caused many oil spills that destroy our environment, such as when millions barrels of oil spilled into the Gulf of Mexico killing fish, birds, and many other animals.

**Topic Solves: Phasing out fossil fuels quickly will prevent future pollution**

* Phasing out fossil fuels prevents future contamination from happening. This would allow our air quality to improve over time, and our water and lands to be protected from future oil spills that contaminate the ecosystem.
* Over many years, NPR reports that native tribes and indigenous communities have been fighting to stop new construction of fossil fuel projects such as the Keystone XL and Dakota Access oil pipelines because they threaten to spill oil and contaminating their lands. Phasing out fossil fuels would protect the nature and resources of every community in the country.

**Impact: Fossil fuel pollution affects everything and the entire environment**

* Pollution from fossil fuels affects every species, from animals to humans. For example, the National Wildlife Foundation states that when an oil spill happens in an ocean like during the spill in the Gulf of Mexico in 2010, animals from fish to birds got sick and died. This even impacted humans because fishing couldn’t be done safely because of the contamination. Air pollution affects every species that breathes the air too.
* Research from Harvard University in 2021 found that more than 8 million people have died in the year 2018 from fossil fuel pollution—meaning that air pollution from burning fossil fuels like oil and coal was responsible for about 20 percent of deaths worldwide.

**2 PRO: Responses to CON Arguments**

Answering Need to Transition Slow:

* According to the Natural Resources Defense Council, the US has made major progress in increasing renewable energy in the United States over the past 10 years, thanks to government actions that have helped to grow the use of clean energy. That means that we’re currently ready to phase out fossil fuels completely.
* Transitioning away from fossil fuels slowly means more damage from global warming. The longer we wait to reduce emissions, the more sea levels will rise, and more natural disasters will happen while we wait. That means more people will suffer from the increasing global warming so that fossil fuel companies can continue to make more money at the expense of people’s lives.

Answering Economy:

* According to Forbes Magazine, renewable energy is on track to become cheaper than fossil fuels, which is increasing clean energy development and jobs. On top of that, the energy efficiency industry has contributed more to the country’s energy needs over the past 40 years than oil, coal, natural gas. That job field accounts for more than 2.2 million jobs in the US—at least 10 times more than oil and gas drilling or coal mining.
* The United Nations has argued that the health of the planet outweighs the money made from fossil fuels. Money can always be made later, and new jobs can be created, but our environment can’t be replaced. Damage to our land, air, and water from pollution are things that can’t be fixed and same with the people and animals who will suffer or die from the harm of fossil fuels on our planet.

**CON**

**1 CON: Case and Contentions** (2nd and 3rd Con speakers defend these arguments)

**My partners and I reject the topic: The US should phase out fossil fuels quickly**

**We define “phase out” as:** “an act of discontinuing a process, project, or service in phases” (Oxford Languages Dictionary). It means stopping the use of oil, gas, and coal.

**Contention 1: Need to Transition Slow**

**World is Good: The US is slowly transitioning to green technology as its still being developed**

* The United States has been leading the world in “green growth” by transitioning to renewable energies slowly as they are made better. According to the Brookings Institute, this transition to “green growth” comes from companies creating new technology and getting the government and businesses to start using it.
* According to Bloomberg, phasing out fossil fuels requires working towards three different challenges. First is encouraging the transition to building new energy infrastructure and technology. Then transitioning the economy and companies based on clean energy. And lastly making the world greener. Progress is being made towards these goals, but it is not something that can be done right away.

**Topic Bad: Phasing out fossil fuels too quickly would leave us with ineffective green tech**

* Phasing out fossil fuels in the US too soon would leave us with green technology that still needs to get better before it can support the entire country. According to the Heritage Foundation, green technology like wind power and solar power only works to make electricity when the wind is blowing or the sun is shining. This is an engineering challenge, since the power grid operates around the clock: power needs to be made and used at the same time.
* This issue prevents full renewable green technology being used for the US’s energy needs. Currently, no battery storage system exists to hold enough energy in power grids across the US for our continuous need for energy every day and night. That’s why fossil fuel energy generation often fills in the gaps in electricity production today, because no area in the United States can consistently supply their power grid with renewable energy only created electricity.

**Impact: US power consumption would be significantly reduced**

* According to Development Education, renewable energy sources – such as wind and solar power – only make up 7 percent of the world’s energy needs. This means that fossil fuels, are supplying 93% of the world’s energy resources. If we phased out fossil fuels too soon, we would not have enough power to meet everyone’s energy needs.
* According to the Guardian, that means we would have dramatically less power than what is currently used in the country. Here’s what that could look like. Maybe you could only be able to have your lights and heat on in your house for a certain amount of time a day. People wouldn’t be able to drive to work, school, or to the grocery store as much. And things that people want to buy won’t be as available because they can’t be sent by planes or boats from across the world. Life would not be as good if we phased out fossil fuels too quickly.

**Contention 2: Economy**

**World is Good: The fossil fuels strongly benefit the US economy**

* The US Department of Energy has said that fossil fuels provide more than 66 percent of the energy Americans consume daily and also keeps the US’s economy strong. Deputy Secretary of Energy Mark Menezes announced that fossil fuel resources are integral to our standard of living and quality of life.
* Not only is natural gas the biggest contributor to the US’s electric power grid, but oil and natural gas are also increasing the U.S. economy in other sectors. According to the American Enterprise Institute, fossil fuels innovate the manufacturing industry by supplying high-tech materials like stronger and more durable plastics. And the fossil fuel industry has increased sales from exporting liquefied natural gas, as well as supporting renewable energy projects, two things that both create well-paying jobs across the country.

**Topic Bad: Phasing out fossil fuels quickly would eliminate this industry**

* According to Samantha Gross, a writer for Brookings, hurting the US economy is not the way to deal with global warming. Phasing out fossil fuels too quickly leaves us with the question and issue of what will take its place. Current renewable energy sources aren’t a good substitute for oil, both in terms of its availability and effectiveness. Although there is only so much oil and natural gas on Earth, it is plentiful and the technology to extract it continues to improve, making it ever-more economically good to produce and use.
* Forbes Magazine argues that phasing out of fossil fuels would put all the fossil fuel companies out of business which is a big part of the US economy. But it would also mean switching to less effective renewable energy sources. Because there would be less energy, prices for almost everything in the US would increase leaving many things too expensive for most people to afford.

**Impact: The fossil fuel industry is important to the US economy**

* The fossil fuel industry is a major part of the US economy and is connected to almost every aspect of our lives – how we get to places, what things we buy and own, and how we live comfortably in our homes.
* According to the American Petroleum Institute, America’s oil and natural gas industry supports 10 million jobs in the United States and nearly 8 percent of our nation’s Gross Domestic Product. That’s economic growth equaling hundreds of billions of dollars in the country every year. Fossil fuels create jobs across multiple other job sectors too that pay high wages and help American families work their way up the economic ladder.
* Reuters Magazine reports that phasing out fossil fuels would crash the economy because many people would lose their jobs, and things would be more expensive. That means poverty increases in the country, where more and more people can’t afford basic necessities and may become homeless and unable to take care of themselves.

**2 CON: Responses to PRO Arguments**

Answering Global Warming:

* According to the US Energy Information Administration, using fossil fuels for energy accounted for 74 percent of total US greenhouse gas emissions. More than 25 percent of the US’s pollution comes from non-fossil fuel sources such as methane and nitrous oxide. That means that immediately phasing out fossil fuels wouldn’t stop continued global warming, it would just hurt the economy and Americans quality of life.
* Even if phasing out fossil fuels in the US would decrease CO2 emissions, it wouldn’t limit emissions from other countries. The Foreign Policy Institute says that China and Russia both use similar amounts of fossil fuels as we do, and many countries that don’t have as big of an economy as the US don’t have the technology or money to switch to green renewable energy. That means in the world, CO2 emissions would still be at dangerous levels and wouldn’t stop global warming.

Answering Pollution:

* Pollution from fossil fuels has been getting less every year through technological innovation and utilizing better and safer resources. The fossil fuel industry knows that pollution is a major problem, and it actively invests money to make their products and our world cleaner, healthier, and safer for everyone without sacrificing the benefits that fossil fuels provide.
* According to Michael McElroy, author of the book “Energy and Climate,” the transition to natural gas as the main fossil fuel has greatly decreased emissions to provide cleaner energy. He notes that CO2 emissions from natural gas are 45 percent lower than those from coal, 27 percent lower than from diesel, and 25 percent lower than from gasoline.
* Our World in Data reports have shown that oil spills and leaks have dramatically decreased over the years. While in the 1970s there were 24 large oil spills per year, in the 2010s the average number of large oil spills decreased to 1.7 oil spills per year. This happened also as the worldwide trade of petroleum and gas products increased, which means over the years the technology has improved to make transportation of fossil fuels safer.