

NEWSLETTER *Published July 29, 2024 • 9 minute read*

On the Grid: What A Difference A Week Makes... 07/26/24



Mary Sagatlova, Senior Advocacy Advisor

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Welcome back to *On the Grid*, Third Way's bi-weekly newsletter, where we'll recap how we're working to deploy every clean energy technology as quickly and affordably as possible and cut through the election year noise to parse out what this year means for clean energy.

And about that noise – what a week!

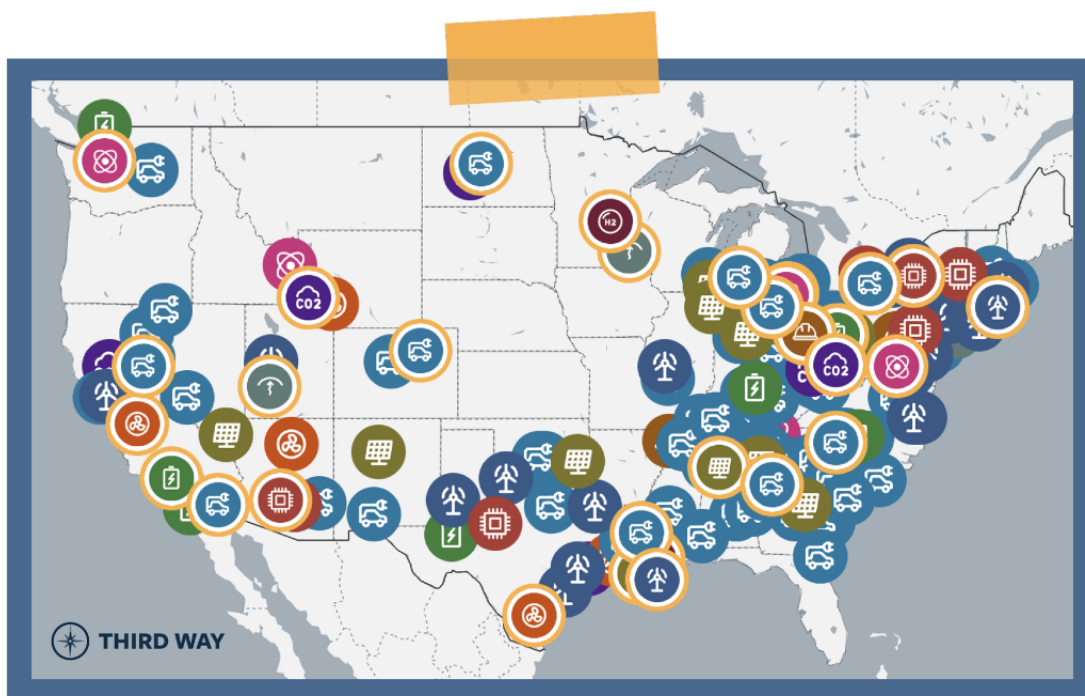
Changes at the top of the ticket have shifted the vibe in Washington among Democrats from 'helpless' to 'hopeful'. Third Way endorsed Kamala Harris for President of the United States. As we said in our statement, which you can read in full [here](#), she “is precisely the tough, smart leader we need in this moment.”



AMERICAN COMPETITIVENESS

Analysis from [Rhodium Group](#) and [MIT](#) shows that since 2021, we've seen over \$600 billion in both public and private investment in clean energy. These are massive investments with real benefits for our communities – but it can be hard to visualize what that means for everyday Americans.

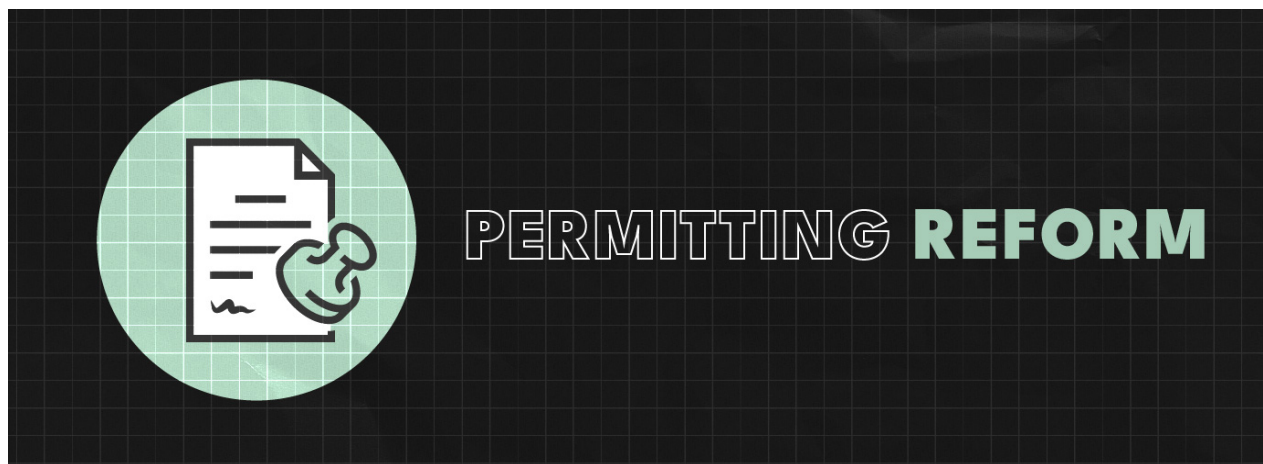
To help bring these clean energy investments to life, we launched our new interactive [When America Leads: Communities Shaping US Clean Energy Competitiveness](#) tool, an online map and database that tells the story of how clean energy and related investments are impacting communities across the US.



We track investments across 11 different clean energy technologies, describing how clean energy is creating economic opportunities and restoring America's competitive edge in areas like manufacturing, engineering, software development, and construction.

Why This Matters: The energy transition has serious economic benefits – both for America’s place in the global economy and at the community level. But, many Americans only think about clean energy in the context of climate change. Unfortunately, our polling shows most voters aren’t prioritizing climate action this year. For the energy transition to be successful, Americans have to understand and embrace its economic benefits and impacts on their communities. This map helps quantify those impacts.

What We’re Doing: Clean energy investments are under tremendous scrutiny in this election cycle, with many in the GOP dismissing critical clean energy technologies as unnecessary. We'll continue to expand the map and, perhaps more importantly, brief key stakeholders and allies on how our data can show the tangible economic benefits of the energy transition and help rebut attacks on clean energy investments.



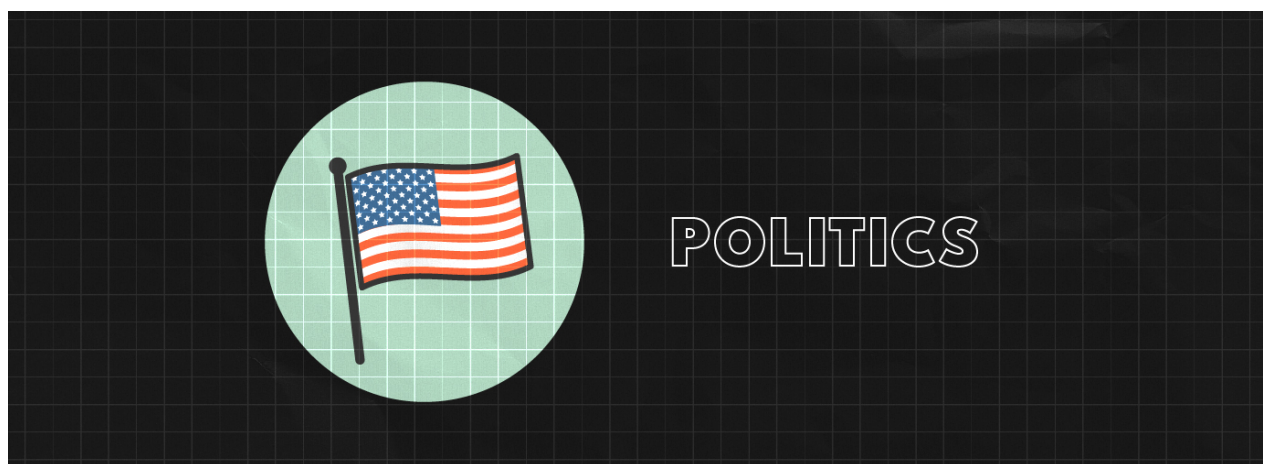
This week, Senators Joe Manchin (D-WV) and John Barrasso unveiled a long-awaited bill to streamline the permitting process. The Energy Permitting Reform Act of 2024 is a strong first step to speed up approvals for all energy projects in the US. A few highlights:

- **Strengthens Our Transmission Network:** The bill tackles some of the biggest barriers to transmission development by improving planning, permitting, and cost allocation processes. It grants the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) significant new backstop siting authority for transmission lines, which could rapidly accelerate the build-out of this infrastructure by giving powerlines statutory parity with pipelines.
- **Implements Post-Chevron Safeguards:** By providing direct legislative guidance to FERC, the bill protects permitting and transmission decisions from legal challenges, a critical protection in the wake of the Chevron ruling.

- **Turbocharging Clean Energy Deployment:** The bill doubles the Biden-Harris Administration's goal from 25 GW to 50 GW of permitted solar, onshore wind, and geothermal energy on public lands by 2025. And it accelerates permitting processes for renewable projects through reasonable categorical exclusions and by expanding the range of eligible clean projects to include geothermal and hydropower technologies.
- **Strikes A Balance with Fossil Fuels:** This bill is designed to promote clean energy without penalizing fossil fuel producers. There are some pieces that won't land with many in the climate space—namely a minimum number of lease sales per year, a 90-day time limit for application approvals, and an end to the pause on LNG exports. But by expediting judicial review for *all* energy infrastructure and establishing a 150-day statute of limitations, the bill pushes clean energy industries forward without hiking the cost of fossil fuels.

Why This Matters: Without permitting reform, the US will struggle to meet its climate goals and waste much of the legislative progress and private sector investments gained in the past three years. Opposition from some groups on the Left due to its provisions for fossil fuel projects misses the point: the emissions benefits of fast-tracking clean energy infrastructure far outweigh any potential emissions from oil and gas—by a long shot.

What We're Doing: Many in the energy community—us included—thought permitting reform was unlikely this year. We're thrilled it still has a chance. There's a small window to refine the proposal and move it through Congress before the end of the year. Our team has been deeply engaged with key policymakers all year, equipping them with the insights they need to understand the cost and non-cost barriers to clean energy deployment and make smart, impactful legislative decisions. As Senior Director Ryan Fitzpatrick told *Heatmap* this week, "Even if this doesn't pass, this is the baseline for conversations," Ryan Fitzpatrick of Third Way told me. "This is a net win for climate ... it's the starting point, however it may be adapted."



With a new presumptive nominee at the top of the Democratic ticket, many American voters are taking a fresh look at the major party candidates for president. The Biden-Harris Administration

has had significant success implementing its clean energy policy agenda, but polling shows that few Americans know or care about these policy achievements. With GOP attacks on clean energy growing by the day, that's a challenge for Vice President Kamala Harris.

Our team has spent months working with Impact Research to understand how Americans nationwide think about clean energy and how clean energy proponents can talk about these important policies in a way that resonates with key voting groups.

- **Climate voters will not save us:** As much as we'd like it to be otherwise, climate change is not a core concern for most voters in this election. Voters' top worries are economic. Our polls show that just 4-6% of Americans rank climate change as their top issue heading into this election. In contrast, the plurality is focused on reducing inflation and lowering the cost of living. Democrats cannot maintain the long-held belief that climate is a turnout motivator. To win, they'll need to talk dollars and cents.
- **Pocket-book concerns are widespread:** We found that economic concerns are especially strong among three key groups: young voters, Latino voters, and voters without a college degree. These groups largely distrust Democrats to deliver the economic relief they need. In fact, these constituencies trust former President Trump's management of the economy by a 21-30 point margin.
- **The right messaging can grow the clean energy coalition:** Messages that focus on how clean energy can boost energy independence, revitalize the economy by lowering costs, generate good-paying domestic jobs, and improve public health resonate the best. Messages centered solely on fighting climate change or protecting the environment not only performed poorly but also alienated critical voter groups. To reach a broader audience, clean energy advocates have to retool their messaging to take a more economic approach.

Why does this matter? And what's next? Our polling showed that voters were less likely to support a candidate who focused on clean energy over economic issues. When they talk about these issues, Vice President Kamala Harris and her campaign should lean into the economic advantages of clean energy in their messaging to spotlight the economic advantages — centering on low costs, greater opportunity, and increased energy independence—to build support from critical voting blocs.

What We're Doing: Our team has been working to correct the narrative on clean energy technologies, briefing key stakeholders and allies on how to best shift messaging toward cost benefits, economic opportunity, and energy independence, and contextualizing the scope of the issue with dozens of reporters.



INTERNATIONAL NEWS

Earlier this month, the Labour Party celebrated a resounding victory in the UK parliamentary elections. Now-Prime Minister Keir Starmer, with a strong centrist focus on economic growth, national security, and border integrity, offers a vision of stability and prosperity that stands in stark contrast to the dysfunction and chaos of the past 14 years of Tory rule. You can read our deeper analysis [here](#), but let's unpack what a Labour victory means:

Impact on Domestic Climate Policy: The new Labour government is working to make Great Britain a “[clean energy superpower](#)” – an ambitious goal but within reach with a robust industrial policy in place. And, we're already seeing the government take steps in the right direction, [lifting the de facto ban on new onshore wind farms](#), [greenlighting new solar farms](#), and [dropping the legal defense of a proposed new coal mine](#). But the clock is ticking. As the Climate Change Committee's [recent progress report](#) to Parliament noted, the UK is not moving quickly enough to stay on track with its 2030 emissions targets.

Impact on Transatlantic Cooperation: The new Labour government presents a critical opportunity for the UK and US to strengthen their transatlantic partnership in clean energy, particularly when it comes to technologies like nuclear energy. As part of the [Sapporo 5](#), both countries have pledged to mobilize significant government-led investments in global nuclear supply chains and increase enrichment capacity—a decisive move to reduce reliance on Russian energy.

Both nations are independently advancing their own nuclear capabilities, setting parallel trajectories that can lead to a powerful partnership. The UK [recently invested](#) £196 million in Urenco for a high assay low enriched uranium (HALEU) facility in northern England, demonstrating a firm commitment to expanding and modernizing its nuclear energy sector. Meanwhile, the US is working to develop a modernized approach to licensing new reactor technologies—most recently through the passage of [the ADVANCE Act](#). These parallel efforts underscore a shared vision and are building a strong foundation for deeper transatlantic cooperation.

What We're Doing: Our team and our affiliate, [Carbon-Free Europe](#), have engaged extensively with the Labour Party on clean energy. In January 2024, we worked [with the Tony Blair Institute for](#)

Global Change to analyze the UK's potential in clean energy technologies and identified significant opportunities for the UK to expand offshore wind, nuclear, hydrogen, and other clean energy supply chains. As the Starmer government settles in, we will continue providing crucial analysis and data to support strategic decisions.



- Maxine Joselow, in *The Washington Post*, dives into what a Republican Congress sweep could mean for the future of climate and clean energy policy in 2025.
- Jim Kapsis and Michael Sachse, In the final installment of a 3-part series on clean energy finance for *Latitude Media*, offer cautionary advice to clean energy technology firms and venture capitalists about their market strategies.
- Rob Meyer and Jesse Jenkins, on *Shift Key*, sit down with Third Way's Ryan Norman to discuss the current state of American nuclear energy policy and how nuclear energy has evolved into a bipartisan issue.