



Maryland must lead on renewable energy

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In his opinion piece, Tom Firey stated that Del. Shane Robinson is introducing a bill for 100 percent renewable energy in 2050 ([“Md. renewable energy mandates: Corporate welfare disguised as environmentalism”](#), Sept. 27). This is wrong. Delegate Robinson’s bill will require 100 percent clean energy by 2035. But most importantly, Mr. Firey missed that this legislation will strip out dirty forms of energy currently allowed under Maryland’s Renewable Portfolio Standard. Thus, when this bill becomes law, Maryland residents will have power sourced from only clean energy — wind and solar — not coal, natural gas, nor “trash, biomass, methane and manure.” (I admit to being somewhat puzzled by Mr. Firey’s inclusion of methane in his list of dirty alternatives to natural gas given that natural gas is primarily methane, but I agree that it should not be considered a clean energy source in Maryland.)

A study requested by Energy Secretary [Rick Perry](#) concluded that renewable electricity generation is not a threat to grid reliability. It is possible Secretary Perry was not surprised by the result since as governor of Texas he is used to a state electrical grid with a high level of renewable generation. Mr. Firey’s claims about the cost of wind and solar energy are also misleading. Both the Department of Energy and Lazard agree that wind and utility-scale solar are already cost competitive with fossil fuels — and in many instances, are cheaper. Mr. Firey’s favored plan of a carbon tax happens to also be the favored plan of such major polluters as Exxon. The reason for this is clear: under a carbon tax major polluters can keep on polluting with impunity as long as they are willing to pay for it. The carbon tax poses no threat to their business model and enables them to keep up with business as usual for decades to come.

But we can’t afford decades more of business as usual. The increasing intensity of storms and rising sea levels pose a real threat to Marylanders. That’s why the libertarian carbon tax pushed by the Cato Institute is the wrong approach and Delegate Robinson’s is the right one for Maryland.