

Alexandria Vittone

Renewable Energy

Renewable energy has been used throughout history. People would use wind and their sails to cross the ocean and windmills to grind grain collected from fields. Today, it is used to generate electricity in homes and communities. The four way test is a set of ethical questions that we can ask ourselves in our day to day life to help make a decision on whether something may be acceptable or not. These questions include, Is it the truth? Is it fair? Will it build goodwill? Will it be beneficial to all concerned? These questions can help us make a decision on whether or not renewable energy is an acceptable way we should power our future. Renewable energy aids in a cleaner and more sustainable future and should be widely utilized by everyone.

The first question of the four way test and one of the most important concerning renewable energy. Is it the truth? Is renewable energy really better for the environment? Power generated through renewable energy sources is considered to be less harmful for the environment compared to the use of fossil fuels. An NREL study found “generating 35% of electricity using wind and solar in the western U.S. would reduce CO2 emissions by 25-45%.” (*Western Wind and Solar Integration Study*) Through studies and research it has been found that by using renewable energy sources it can help to decrease the amount of CO2 emitted into the atmosphere. CO2 being one of the main contributors to global climate change, the reduction of emissions could do wonders to help reduce its effect on climate change. Some may think that renewable energy won't be able to power our lives, but it's believed that the United States has the capability to create more than enough power through renewable

energy resources. According to the National Renewable Energy Laboratory's, "the USA has 228,081 gigawatts in theoretical potential for renewable energy. Renewables can meet our current electricity consumption several times over." (*Renewable energy*) The United States would be able to power our nation in a much cleaner way through the use of renewable energy resources. This shows that the United States doesn't need to rely on fossil fuels for power generation and could solely use power generated from renewable sources. Furthermore, the use of renewable energy can be very impactful for our ever changing climate and the United States has the resources to expand their use of renewable energy.

Renewable energy may not be thought of as fair to everyone, considering the price that is often associated with renewable energy sources. These energy sources aren't as expensive as one may think. It is said, "renewable energy actually is the cheapest power option in most parts of the world today." (*Renewable energy – powering a safer future*) With renewable sources being one of the cheapest options for energy, many lower and middle class countries or people could be able to afford the clean energy sources. Not only is renewable energy fair for people, but it's also fair for our animals. According to the National Park Service, "Climate change has produced threats to wildlife. Rising temperatures lower many species survival rates due to changes that lead to less food, and less successful reproduction." (*U.S. National Park Service*) Animals are negatively affected by our changing environment and renewable energy resources can bring animals the better environment they deserve in order to thrive. Renewable energy sources are wonderful for all and they give the opportunity for everyone to have access to them.

Another essential question of the 4-way test, will it build goodwill? Renewable energy plays an important role in creating a healthier environment. Energy created from fossil fuels creates air pollution and according to the World Health Organization, the majority of people breathe air that exceeds the air quality limits that causes threats to their health. (*Unhealthy air*) Millions of people are harmed each year from the breathing of poor air. With the use of more renewable energy sources we could reduce the amount of harmful substances released into the air and reduce the amount of harm done to people's health. Renewable energy will also help expand energy access for low income, or remote communities. A great example of this is how, "renewable sources of electricity have been used to alleviate energy poverty. In rural areas in southeast Asia and sub-Saharan Africa.." (*Shifts to renewable energy*) Renewable energy is a wonderful opportunity for communities who may be less fortunate or who are just off the grid. It can give them access to clean and reliable energy that can help fuel their lives. Overall renewable energy will help save many people's lives as well as improve the quality of many people's lives for the better.

Renewable energy not only is beneficial to rural communities, but it also brings enormous benefits to people and the economy. The renewable energy resources will need to be manufactured, installed and maintained creating many jobs in the process. According to the International Labour Organization, "Worldwide employment in renewable energy reached 12.7 million last year, a jump of 700,000 new jobs in one year." (*Renewable energy jobs*) Jobs within renewable energy keep substantially increasing by the year with the high demand for a cleaner way to power our communities. Renewable energy will create many new opportunities for work and will help provide people with a well paying job. Not only

will renewable energy bring people opportunities to make money, but it also gives people the opportunity to save some money. My family has rooftop solar panels. These solar panels save my family hundreds of dollars each year in electricity. Although renewable energy like solar panels can be expensive upfront, the amount a person saves on electricity over the years makes up for the initial expense. Renewable energy is overall beneficial to all who want to get involved in the use of sustainable power.

In conclusion, the adoption of renewable energy aligns with the principles of the four way test. It demonstrates the truth, fairness, goodwill, and benefits for all. Renewable energy sources are overall better for the environment, since they significantly reduce CO2 emissions and reduce the impacts of climate change. They make our Earth a better place not only for us, but our wildlife. Economically, renewable energy is an affordable option that can be accessible to a wide range of people in all social classes. It generates employment opportunities and long term financial savings. Additionally, renewable energy helps improve air quality aiding in better health and quality of life for everyone. Renewable energy is substantially a better option for producing the energy. It will help protect the environment we live in and rely on. It is essential to make a shift toward a cleaner and more sustainable world for the health and benefit of all.

Bibliography

“Wildlife and Climate Change (U.S. National Park Service).” *National Parks Service*, U.S. Department of the Interior, www.nps.gov/articles/000/wildlife-climateimpact.htm. Accessed 23 May 2024.

“Renewable Energy: Myth vs. Fact.” *Oceana*, oceana.org/renewable-energy-myth-vs-fact-0/#:~:text=Myth%3A%20Renewable%20energy%2C%20like%20solar,mixed%20use%20of%20the%20land. Accessed 23 May 2024.

“Shifts to Renewable Energy Can Drive up Energy Poverty, Study Finds.” *ScienceDaily*, ScienceDaily, 12 July 2019, www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2019/07/190712151926.htm.

“Renewable Energy – Powering a Safer Future.” *United Nations*, United Nations, www.un.org/en/climatechange/raising-ambition/renewable-energy. Accessed 23 May 2024.

“Renewable Energy Jobs Hit 12.7 Million Globally.” *International Labour Organization*, 18 Apr. 2024, www.ilo.org/resource/news/renewable-energy-jobs-hit-127-million-globally.

“Billions of People Still Breathe Unhealthy Air: New Who Data.” *World Health Organization*, World Health Organization, www.who.int/news/item/04-04-2022-billions-of-people-still-breathe-unhealthy-air-new-who-data. Accessed 23 May 2024.

“Western Wind and Solar Integration Study.” *NREL*, www.nrel.gov/grid/wwsis.html. Accessed 23 May 2024.