The Policy

What it does

Establishes the Interagency Task Force on Rural Prosperity and promotes rural energy production.

Synopsis

This Executive Order [13] establishes the Interagency Task Force on Agriculture and Rural Prosperity [14], a group convened to make policy recommendations in support of the economic revitalization of rural American communities [15]. The Order has six sections, as detailed below.

In section one, the Order explains the purpose of the policy. With particular reference to energy, it states that it is “in the national interest to promote American agriculture and protect the rural communities where food, fiber, forestry, and many of our renewable fuels are cultivated.”

In sections two and three, the Order establishes the Interagency Task Force on Agriculture and Rural Prosperity, sets the Secretary of Agriculture as its chair [16], and defines its other membership to include:

- Secretary of the Treasury [17]
- Secretary of Defense [18]
- Attorney General [19]
- Secretary of the Interior [20]
- Secretary of Commerce [21]
- Secretary of Labor [22]
- Secretary of Health and Human Services [23]
- Secretary of Transportation [24]
- Secretary of Energy [25]
- Secretary of Education [26]
- Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency [27]
- Chairman of the Federal Communications Commission [28]
- Director of the Office of Management and Budget [29]
- Director of the Office of Science and Technology Policy [30] (Vacant as of the Issuing of this Order)
- Director of the Office of National Drug Control Policy [31] (Vacant as of the Issuing of this Order)
- Chairman of the Council of Economic Advisers [32]
- Director of the Domestic Policy Council [33] (Vacant as of the Issuing of this Order)
- Director of the National Economic Council [34] (Vacant as of the Issuing of this Order)
- Administrator of the Small Business Administration [35]
- United States Trade Representative [36]
- Director of the National Science Foundation [37]
- Heads of such other executive departments, agencies, and offices as the President or the Secretary of Agriculture may, from time to time, designate...
In section four, the Order sets the purpose of the task force; subsection (a)(xi), with particular relevance to energy, instructs the Task Force to “further the Nation’s energy security by advancing traditional and renewable energy production in the rural landscape.” Subsection (a)(xii) further instructs the Task Force to “address hurdles associated with access to resources on public lands” – a mandate which would include the extraction of fossil fuels as well as the production of renewable energy and harvesting of biomass fuel.

In section six, the Order revokes Executive Order 13575 [38] of June 9, 2011 (Establishment of the White House Rural Council), and the White House Rural Council, which established a council under the Obama Administration to “better coordinate Federal programs and maximize the impact of Federal investment to promote economic prosperity and quality of life in our rural communities.”

Within 180 days of the issuance of this Order (on or before October 22, 2017), the Task Force is responsible for submitting a report to the President describing policy suggestions to meet the aforementioned goals.

Context

Economics

The vast majority of energy extraction and production takes place in rural areas. In many of these places, energy extraction or electricity production is central to the local economy both as a source of high-paying jobs and/or local tax revenue [39].

The traditional energy sector employs more than 3.6 million United States workers [40], with approximately 600,000 in renewable energy subfields within this. An additional 1.9 million workers are employed in energy efficiency [40], and approximately 2 million more workers are employed in construction positions tangential to energy needs.

Currently, renewable energy accounts for about 15% [41] of total US energy production. That percentage is expected to rise, though, as renewable technology and storage systems improve to allow for more production. Renewable energy is power production from sources that can regenerate, such as from the sun, wind, and water. Currently, the US draws energy from hydropower [42], geothermal [43], wind [44], solar [45], and biomass [46] renewable sources.

Demographics

The current energy workforce is getting older - the average age of an energy worker is over 50 years old [47], and 45% of workers in the energy utility sector alone are planning to retire by 2024 [48]. Newer and younger workers must be trained to avoid a future skills gap [49] in the energy sector that could result in lost productivity.

Policy History

A related Executive Order 13575: Establishment of the White House Rural Council [38] (June 9, 2011), which established the White House Rural Council to assess, coordinate, and recommend agricultural policy, was revoked by this Order.

The Science

Science Synopsis

Traditional Energy Production in the United States

Traditional energy production in the U.S. generally refers to production derived from fossil fuels (coal, oil, natural gas and other derivatives). Fossil fuels provide energy through the process of combustion [50]; they are burned to produce electricity, heat or transportation power. These fuels are considered non-renewable, since the timeframe required for them to be replenished through geological processes is significantly longer than the rate at which they are being extracted.

The primary drawbacks to fossil fuel use are the functionally finite amount of supply [51] and the emission of greenhouse gasses [52] and other pollutants [53] when these fuels are extracted and/or burned to generate energy. Coal is used predominantly for electricity generation and petroleum predominantly in the transportation sector, while natural gas is used for industrial, residential and electricity generation needs.

Renewable Energy Production in the United States

Renewable energy production derives fuel from sunlight, wind, water, geothermal heat or biomass products. These fuels are functionally unlimited in their availability, though they are not always present in economically useful quantities at all times in all locations. Renewable energy has been growing rapidly (see chart below) in recent years due to a combination of falling costs [54] and policy incentives [55]. With the exception of biomass and its derivatives, renewable fuels generate energy without combustion and therefore do not emit harmful pollutants such as CO2 or particulate matter [56]. Renewable fuels are also, in general, less environmentally harmful when extracted compared to fossil fuels though land-use alteration [57] is still common when constructing renewable generation facilities.

Status

This order was issued by President Donald J. Trump on April 25, 2017.

Recommended Citation


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