

Mass. should ditch fossil fuel dependency

To the editor:

Lauren Stevens reported on COP 23 and very hopeful efforts by some world leaders to convince 50 countries to commit to phasing out coal electricity ("Many here, abroad, counter Trump environmental acts," Eagle, oped, Nov. 27). Already, 19 countries signed on. It'll be great when the world's largest coal users and exporters (like Australia) also commit to quitting coal. Australia's electricity is about 75 percent derived from coal; they don't seem to have plans to quit coal, but renewable energy trends may push them to reassess.

During 2016 and 2017, business journals reported that new solar electricity contracts from Chile, Mexico and Dubai were priced under 3 cents/kWh (cheaper than coal electricity). Even more interesting for Americans, Tucson's utility contracted in 2017 for solar electricity priced under 3 cents/kWh. This is half the rate Tucson paid on previous solar contracts.

In comparison, America's cheapest fossil-fuel electricity is just under 5 cents/kWh, with average American residential electricity rates around 12 cents/kWh. Solar's pricing is very exciting!

The most electrifying recent news is from South Australia. Three years ago, South Australia decided to phase out its coal electricity. This one state now derives 40 percent of its electricity from wind. But it has suffered vexing power shortages due to renewable energy's variability. To stop the outages, South Australia just bought a 100 MW Tesla battery. Elon Musk promised the battery would be completed and installed within 100 days, or it would be free. Tesla completed it in 55 days.

Meanwhile, battery prices are dropping as world battery production levels accelerate. And Tesla announced new electric cars and trucks with a range of 500 to 600 miles without needing a recharge. Our low-carbon technology is revving up.

If South Australia can quit coal, Massachusetts can cut its unhelpful natural gas dependency. It can also develop enough cheap, clean, renewable electricity to meet future electric vehicle needs, thus

eliminating transportation sector emissions too.

Please ask your state representative, state senator and Governor Baker to focus on renewable electricity, and begin planning to phase out natural gas electricity. As a CEO of a Canadian utility closing its coal facilities recently warned against building natural gas plants: "I fundamentally believe . . . you want to find the way to make electricity without carbon if you want it to be a good investment."

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Brookline

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