



February 23, 2023

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By Marcy Franck

Welcome to the **FIRST** issue of the **FOURTH** year of *The Climate Optimist*. 🎉

Hey! If you had told me in 2019, when headwinds against federal climate action clocked a bajillion knots per hour, that we would have made this much progress by 2023, I would have swooned backwards onto my fainting couch.

We published our first issue while the EPA—and science itself!—was under attack, the government was rolling back climate policies at blistering speed, and we had recently (but temporarily) pulled out of the Paris Agreement.

Now we have three new federal climate laws and the wind is finally at our back. We also have AI to nudge us into evermore innovative climate solutions, though it could also spread misinformation and put creative folks like me out of work. So, just for giggles *laughs nervously* I went over to ChatGPT to see what it could do.

“Please write a newsletter on climate progress,” I asked politely. Seconds later it produced an overview of worldwide climate actions not too far from points you might read in this newsletter.

“Crap, crap, CRAP!” I yelled, startling my dog, whose face suggested I look into alternative careers, perhaps busking climate stories on subway platforms. But chatbots gotta chat so I asked, “Can you do it again, and make it funny?”

Oof. ChatGPT’s “Climate Progress Newsletter: A Belly Laugh Edition” was dorky at best and inaccurate at worst. Plus, its thinly-veiled cynicism (“This newsletter might just turn into a sob fest”) made Chatbot someone you wouldn’t want to sit next to at a dinner party, whereas we’ve already established that I am an adorably awkward dinner companion.

“TAKE THAT, CHATBOT!” I yelled, because I am also a professional woman of poise and substance.

So this month we’ll do something uniquely human: Celebrate four years of climate progress and check on how things are going with our new climate laws, like the Inflation Reduction Act, *which our chatfriend knows nothing about*. Just saying.

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CLIMATE SOLUTIONS ARE WORKING HARD FOR THE MONEY

So hard for it, honey.

It's great knowing that a whopping \$560B in federal dollars are earmarked for climate solutions; it's better knowing where those funds are bankrolling projects in real-live places.

Behold:



- **\$1B** is cleaning up 22 toxic waste sites nationwide
- **\$930M** is reducing wildfires in 10 western states
- **\$479M** is improving public transit in Louisiana
- **\$173M** is weatherizing buildings in Texas
- **\$105M** is replacing dirty buses and building EV chargers in Kentucky
- **Check out** what's getting funded in your state

Funds are still up for grabs, including:



- **\$27B** to reduce emissions in disinvested communities
- **\$10B** for clean energy projects in low-income communities
- **\$600M** for clean energy projects on farms and rural areas
- **\$100M** for climate and health projects in environmental justice communities
- **\$10M** for community solar in underserved communities

What does the future hold?

Peer into my paper mâché ball made from scientific analyses.



- **The tax benefits in the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA)** will continue for the next decade, providing the certainty industry needs to invest in climate technology and manufacturing.
- **We're entering a "new industrial age" for clean energy:** The IEA predicts \$650B of private investment every year through 2030. By 2024, renewables will supply a quarter of US electricity.
- **The energy transition will create jobs:** If countries stick to their climate pledges, clean energy is expected to add 14 million jobs worldwide this decade, 537k in the U.S. alone.

But we want green investments, and we want them *now!*

Settle down, Veruca Salt. Check it out:



- **Last year, worldwide spending on carbon-free energy** surpassed 1 TRILLION DOLLARS, matching spending on fossil fuels for the first time.
- **New clean energy investments reached \$90B** since the IRA passed 6 months ago, and last year saw \$73B in EV battery plants alone.
- **These investments have already created 100k green jobs**—half don't require a degree, and most pay more than the national median salary.

Clean energy will meet our growing need for electricity

Those EVs & electric appliances ain't gonna power themselves.

- **In the next 3 years,** renewables and nuclear will grow fast enough to meet the extra demand for our all-electric lives.



- **How? Clean energy is less expensive:** It's cheaper to build new wind and solar farms than it is to keep coal plants running, for example.
- **What about coal communities?** \$1.6B in energy incentives is now available through federal funding to help hard-hit communities with the transition.

How to electrify your home

With funds from the IRA, of course.



Not sure where to start? Dr. Gaurab Basu, our Health Equity fellow, explains what drove him to make the switch, and you can start planning for home energy rebates coming soon.

DYK about clean green comfort machines (aka heat pumps)? They heat and cool homes 4x more efficiently than gas-powered systems, reduce your energy bill, defy brutal Maine winters, and are impossible to explain to a 5-year old. Here are 10 questions to ask if you want to get one.

Will going electric make a difference? Even though two-thirds of CO2 emissions come from just 90 big companies, one-third of the CO2 reductions factored into the IRA come from everyday people switching to EVs and electric appliances. So that would be a yes.

Is all of this news to you? Most people don't know much about the IRA, and how we will benefit. Friends don't let friends miss out on tax breaks, so hey! Tell someone today.

Happenings at Harvard



We're accepting applications for our 3rd annual summer Youth Summit on Climate, Equity, and Health. If you know a high school student with an urge to make the world a better place, please share!

Harvard's Salata Institute for Climate and Sustainability, which named five new projects to reduce emissions and improve lives, is planning a hum-dinger of a climate week this May, and introduced the Burke Climate and Health Fellowship to support scholarly research.

March 1 is a community-wide philanthropic effort to make a Harvard Chan education more accessible to bright, ambitious, and deserving students.

Because my job seems safe from AI takeover (for now)

I asked one to create "a watercolor of a woman who writes about climate change and feels relieved."



Dear Optimist, I was happy, but not *that* happy.



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