**Barriers to Renewable Energy: The U.S. Government and Fossil Fuels**

The motto of “keep it in the ground” emerged at the Paris Climate Talks in December of 2015. However, not only were the resulting Paris Climate Accords non-binding on their signatories, they also failed to address the important political forces that foster the continued use of fossil fuels: governmental subsidies, tax breaks, and powerful lobbies. While it is estimated that the United States government spends between 16 and 44 billion dollars each year on renewable energy research and development, 88 billion is allocated to support the fossil fuel industry. The U.S. government continues to promote domestic oil and gas drilling in the name of energy independence, or in the case of natural gas, as a bridge fuel. Critics have noted that if those funds were instead put toward more renewable energy research, the country might solve the approaching energy crisis and begin to address climate change. The challenge will be to design innovative, incentivizing policies that make renewable energy more attractive to private sector investors and business. This policy project identifies and analyzes the political mechanisms that aid and promote the fossil fuel industry in the United States. The author’s research is based on an analysis of United States energy legislation and government publications, as well as research done by non-profits, NGO’s, and environmental organizations. The findings give valuable insight into the political factors behind the continued dominance of fossil fuels within the U.S. energy market. Recommendations are based on an examination of proposed legislation and polices that have effectively shifted the balance of fossil fuels and renewable energy in other countries. Conclusions frame best practices and successful approaches that could be readily adapted to the U.S. market and that offer a politically realistic path forward toward a sustainable future.