

# Steve Cickay

My name is Steve Cickay and I live in Newtown, Pennsylvania near the life-giving Delaware River. I come today before those who have been given awesome power to make decisions that will affect the health of thousands, if not millions, of current and soon to be born generations of living beings. I represent no organization except the human race. Even after 63 years on this planet, I strangely have still within me a shred of idealism that single individuals in our beloved democracy can have an influence on the good and welfare of our shared community. However, the current political and economic climate is sadly weakening that idealism every day. Yet I will persist.

The environmental experts have provided you with their new facts of knowledge which support their intelligent position and I applaud their tenacity, passion and fact-based intelligence. Therefore, I have no new facts to offer so I will instead try a more philosophical approach and offer you rather a new knowledge of facts so you can then hopefully make wiser decisions about our only life-sustaining planet in this solar system.

Leaders are supposed to move their community forward to better, safer, higher ground. What perplexes me today is that there are many passionate intelligent citizens gathered here tonight to plead the case of protecting our precious water and land, yet there is absolutely no one from the polluting powerful wealthy energy industries here tonight who feel compelled to plead their misguided case. I wonder why that is the case. Why are the captains of the polluting industries so confident in their pursuit of short-term profit and governmental victories that they need not come before this board to plead their desire to inflict risky polluting practices on our shared fragile land and water? I frankly am sick of the fact that environmentalists must always play defense against the powerful profit-focused fossil fuel industry. If we had wise leaders who recognized the fragility of our only life-sustaining planet and understood the critical imperative of developing clean, renewable energy technologies, ordinary citizens like me and others in this room wouldn't have to travel long distances to plead their case for the obvious: protect our environment so that our generation and all future generations can flourish. All our energy needs could be obtained from the sun and wind if we but vigorously pursued these technologies. But instead, our leaders support the greed and short-sightedness of polluting industries that continue to destroy and sicken our land, water and thousands of living beings each day. Therefore, I ask you, as leaders, are you complicit in this destruction? What will you tell your children when they awake one day in a Flint, Michigan-like water crisis? That you chose to side with the rich, the powerful, and the ignorant against the side of the champions of good health and clean water? Is that the legacy you will be proud of to bequeath to the next generation?

Many of us are filled with the hubris of the 21st century. We feel we have reached the pinnacle of civilization and congratulate ourselves on our modernity and our fancy technological wizardry based on the state-of-the-art fossil fuel industry. We look back at "primitive" cultures in the past with disdain and call them barbaric or uncivilized (even though some of these so-called primitive cultures wisely practiced a sustainable way of life in harmony with earth, air and water-preserving sound environmental principles.) So I ask you to conduct a science fiction thought-experiment today. Pretend that you now live in the year 4545 (yes, 45 a most ominous number today) and are members of an anthropological team investigating the culture of that "primitive" society living in the 21st century. How would that advanced intellectual and technological society view the backward technologies of our century? How would they understand the poor decisions made by

leaders of government and industry that resulted in oil spills, dead lakes, rivers catching on fire, polluted oceans filled with dying plants and animals, carcinogenic chemicals leaking into the drinking water of thousands, and many other environmental catastrophes engendered by backward polluting technologies? In a 4545 society where there is virtually no pollution due to the harnessing of clean renewable energy sources of sun and wind, the team would ponder "What were these barbarians thinking? We have only one earth; why did they not do more to preserve and protect it?"

"Robert Heinlein originally coined the term grok in his 1961 novel *Stranger in a Strange Land* as a Martian word associated with various literal meanings such as "water", "to drink", "life", or "to live". In this science fiction novel, drinking water is a central focus on Mars, where it is scarce and therefore profoundly valuable. Martians used the merging of their bodies with water as a simple example or symbol of how two entities can combine to create a new reality greater than the sum of its parts. The water becomes part of the drinker, and the drinker part of the water. Both grok each other. Things that once had separate realities become entangled in the same experiences, goals, history, and purpose."

It is my hope and dream that our leaders will one day come to grok the environmentalist vision that we are all caretakers in a strange but beautiful land. I hope that leaders will create a new stronger reality with environmentalists where we strangers, passing together through this strange land in such short lifetimes, fiercely understand our shared duty to protect and preserve the blessing of life-giving water for future generations. I dream of such better days for us all. I hope you will too, and then use your power accordingly.