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Clean Energy Awards Highlights Bipartisan, Inclusive Nature of NC's Clean Energy Economy

Organizations, businesses, and individuals recognized for significant contributions to expanding clean energy market access and competition

RALEIGH, N.C. – Today, the NC Sustainable Energy Association (NCSEA) announces the recipients of its annual clean energy leadership awards. Awardees were selected amongst a pool of more than 300 member organizations and individuals creating significant contributions to an affordable and accessible clean energy economy in the state of North Carolina. Awards were announced in each of the following categories: Sustainable Energy Business of the Year, Individual Sustainable Energy Leader of the Year, Diversity and Inclusion in Sustainable Energy, Women in Clean Energy, Lifetime Achievement, and Legislator of the Year.

“The 2023 clean energy leadership awards demonstrate the importance of building a coalition of energy leaders spanning across political and socioeconomic backgrounds to ensure that the energy future we’re building today represents the needs and interests of all North Carolinians tomorrow,” said Matt Abele, Interim Executive Director at the NC Sustainable Energy Association. “As we map out the next phases of our energy systems in the state, it’s incredibly important that we’re elevating opportunities for new market growth and competition, while helping ratepayers keep their utility costs as low as possible. The organizations and individuals receiving awards this year will be instrumental in leading those conversations during this energy transition.”

Recipients of the 2023 NC Sustainable Energy Association Clean Energy Awards include:

Yes Solar Solutions, winner of the *Sustainable Energy Business of the Year Award*: Yes Solar Solutions has long been an industry leader in rooftop solar deployment in North Carolina – founded in 2009 by co-owners Stew and Kathy Miller. Since the founding, the company has been incredibly active in the clean energy non-profit and advocacy community, helping to spearhead new market opportunities through participation in groups like the NC Sustainable Energy Association and the Carolinas Clean Energy Business Association. More recently, Yes Solar Solutions was selected as the preferred installer for the Solarize the Triangle program to provide group purchasing discounts to homeowners across the region. In 2022, the program saw more than 1,500 residents and businesses sign up for solar evaluations – more than any other solarize campaign in the US. The 2023 program has equally been as successful, adding one megawatt of solar energy to the grid.

Randy Lucas, winner of the *Individual Sustainable Energy Leader of the Year Award*: Randy Lucas has decades of experience and expertise helping businesses and organizations navigate the world of tax incentives, with a special focus on energy related tax provisions. He is an active participant in North Carolina’s clean energy community, previously serving as a board member at the NC Sustainable Energy Association, and in a leadership role with the North Carolina Chapter of the US Green Building Council. More recently, Randy has been instrumental in helping organizations across the state navigate the billions of dollars of federal funding invested in clean energy through the Inflation Reduction Act. He has also been a staunch advocate of diversity and inclusiveness initiatives within the clean energy space, helping to ensure a more equitable, just transition.

William Barber III, winner of the *Diversity & Inclusion in Sustainable Energy Award*: William Barber III has long been a leader in diversity-focused sustainability initiatives in NC – whether through the NC NAACP, the Poor People’s Campaign, the Climate Reality Project, or now with the Rural Beacon Initiative (RBI). RBI is a North Carolina-based social enterprise, that is committed to advancing business sustainability and environmental justice. Through both private and public consultancy, strategic convening, and deploying models for practical, scalable community-based solutions, RBI helps businesses address the triple bottom line with practical, equitable solutions. RBI’s Free Union Farm project exemplifies this work as a multi-year, multi-tier sustainability project with opportunity to preserve a historic site and address black family land loss in rural eastern North Carolina.

Dr. Rita Joyner, winner of the *Women in Clean Energy Award*: As NCSEA’s Senior Advisor, Dr. Rita Joyner led the Women in Clean Energy (WICE) Initiative over the past two years, creating an 800+ person community, empowering women in North Carolina’s clean energy industry through mentorship, networking opportunities, and community. Among her many accomplishments during this time, Dr. Joyner spearheaded efforts to relaunch the WICE mentorship program and create the foundational pillars of WICE: Personal Development, Gender Equity and Equality, Mentorship, and Leadership. Although Dr. Joyner has moved on to professional opportunities outside of NCSEA, her monumental work to build out an inclusive community for women in the clean energy field has generated critical momentum towards diversifying this industry.

Steve Levitas, winner of the *Lifetime Achievement Award*: Steve Levitas is a solar industry veteran and nationally respected authority on energy policy. In addition to leading Pine Gate Renewables’ policy team, Steve devotes much of his time to expanding the offtake opportunities for independently owned solar generation resources through competitive procurement program design, voluntary customer programs, PURPA implementation, and market reform. He worked extensively on the development and passage of landmark clean energy legislation in North Carolina in both 2017 and 2021, as well as in the initial proceeding before the North Carolina Utilities Commission in 2022 leading to the adoption of a plan to reduce electricity sector carbon emissions by 70%. Steve has also been heavily involved in matters relating to transmission and interconnection policies and procedures. Steve is member of the Board of Directors of the Solar Energy Industries Association and New Energy Economics and is a past board member of the Carolinas Clean Energy Business Association and numerous other non-profit organizations.

Representative Kyle Hall, winner of the *Legislator of the Year Award*: Representative Kyle Hall has emerged as a strong conservative clean energy champion in the North Carolina General Assembly, championing numerous pieces of legislation to expand private investment and free market competition, while reducing energy costs for ratepayers across the state. Representative Hall is a co-sponsor of House Bill 503 ‘Storm Resiliency Study’ as a response to widespread blackouts experienced at the end of 2022. This bill would require a comprehensive study to determine the potential benefits of utility market reform, and expansion of customer choice and competition in the state. Additionally, Representative Hall introduced House Bill 535 with the intention to raise the cap on solar leasing and net metering in the state to provide additional options for customer energy independence. He serves as a Chair of the House Energy Committee and the Appropriations Committee where he has played a key role in energy policy in the NC house for years.

This year’s award winners were recognized in-person at NCSEA’s Annual Member Meeting held in conjunction with the [2023 Making Energy Work conference](#) in Raleigh. This year’s conference was attended by hundreds of clean energy influencers and leaders across the country, and featured North Carolina Governor Roy Cooper and Dr. Holmes Hummel as keynote speakers. Additionally, the NC Clean



Energy Technology Center and the UNC Charlotte Energy Production and Infrastructure Center hosted pre-conference workshops available to energy leaders from across the region.

NCSEA extends our congratulations and sincerest thanks to our members and the 2023 award winners.

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About North Carolina Sustainable Energy Association

North Carolina Sustainable Energy Association (NCSEA) is the leading 501(c)(3) non-profit organization that drives public policy and market development for clean energy. Our work enables clean energy jobs, economic opportunities, and affordable energy options for North Carolinians. Learn more about NCSEA, our mission, and our vision at www.energync.org.