

AUGUST 5, 2022

Local climate activists say measure in Congress is a start, but fossil fuel provisions concern them

By **Becca Gvozden, contributor**
Posted in **Harrisonburg Issues**

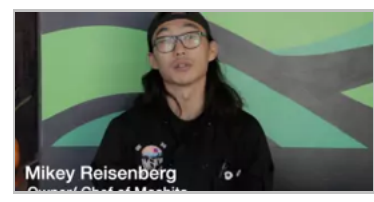
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Harrisonburg's Climate Emergency Choir sings for a sustainable future for all during a rally they called "People vs. Fossil Fuels" in downtown Harrisonburg on Tuesday. (Photo by Becca Gvozden)

Video, photos and article by **Becca Gvozden, contributor**

Environmental activists gathered Tuesday in Court Square to call on President Joe Biden to commit to steps beyond the sweeping energy-related measure moving through Congress. That included calling on the president to declare a climate emergency.

The groups Climate Action Alliance of the Valley and 50by25 Harrisonburg, partnered with People Vs. Fossil Fuels for the peaceful, public protest. The coalition consists of over 1,200 organizations across the country working towards the purpose of ending fossil fuels.

"We're here because we want a future for our children and a future for our planet," one of the organizers, Tom Benevento, told the crowd through his megaphone. "And at the same time that we're here, we acknowledge that it's uncomfortable and it's awkward... because we are partially to blame for the climate crisis."



The rally comes as the U.S. Senate prepares to vote on a measure that proponents say will be the most sweeping energy and climate reforms in the nation's history. Late Thursday, U.S. Sen. **Kyrsten Sinema, an Arizona Democrat, announced she would support the bill**, called the Inflation Reduction Act.

The bill contains **billions of dollars in research and development and tax incentives** for renewable and clean energy sources, as well as cleaner vehicles. In part to appease Democratic U.S. Sen. Joe Manchin of West Virginia, the bill also has provisions, such as potentially easing the permitting for a Mountain Valley Pipeline that would cross through Virginia, **as WRIC-Channel 8 in Richmond reported.**

That has some local activists concerned.



Andrew Payton, alongside Tom Benevento, speaks out to the crowd on Court Square on Tuesday. (Photo by Becca Gvozden)

Benevento works with the New Community Project, involves programs and projects such as Vine and Fig, the Jubilee Climate Farm, working on bike paths, among **others.**

He urged people in the crowd to contact the White House to Biden to declare a climate emergency and end the approval of fossil fuel projects.



Environmental activists hold signs and listen to speakers at the People Vs. Fossil Fuels public peaceful action. (Photo by Becca Gvozden)

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