



Congressman Paul Tonko, the City of Topeka, Generate Capital, and Glenfiddich Receive Energy Vision Awards for Advancing Renewable Fuels

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Energy Vision (EV), a non-profit research organization which studies and promotes clean, carbon-free fuels for a sustainable energy future, held its 15th annual awards event (virtually due to Covid). EV annually presents awards to organizations and people who play a pioneering role in advancing sustainable fuels, especially renewable natural gas (RNG), the lowest-carbon fuel available, which is made from organic wastes. The 2021 awardees, who spoke at last night's event, are **Congressman Paul D. Tonko** of New York, **the City of Topeka**, **Generate Capital**, and **Glenfiddich/William Grant & Sons**.

Methane is a climate "super pollutant," more than 80 times as powerful a warming agent as carbon dioxide over a 20-year period, and the U.S. along with 23 other countries recently pledged to cut methane emissions 30% by 2030. Renewable natural gas is made by capturing the methane biogases emitted as food, agricultural manure, and other organic wastes decompose, preventing them from escaping into the air. The methane gases are then refined into fuel which is chemically similar to fossil natural gas, but vastly superior in terms of its environmental impacts. RNG involves no drilling or fracking, it's fully renewable, and the California Air Resources Board has confirmed that it has the lowest lifecycle greenhouse gas emissions of any fuel available today. In fact, when food wastes and manures are the feedstocks, RNG is net carbon-*negative* over its lifecycle, which means that more GHGs are captured in making it than are emitted by burning it as fuel.

"One of the areas that Energy Vision and I strongly agree upon is the need to deploy and scale low and zero-emissions fuels," said **Congressman Paul Tonko**, who was recognized for a Lifetime of Achievement in clean energy and clean transportation leadership. "The science is clear about the dangers of 'super pollutants' but we also know there are cost-effective solutions to reduce and avoid methane emissions from farms, landfills and wastewater treatment facilities. Capturing methane not only has climate benefits, it can also be a new revenue stream. So I strongly believe we should be looking to support programs and enhance incentives that turn this waste into an opportunity. The transportation sector will have a need for a diverse set of clean fuels."

"We've been working for ten years on how we can convert our Glenfiddich distillery residues into RNG that we use to fuel our transport fleet," said **Paul Basford**, President and Managing Director of William Grant & Sons, Inc. Glenfiddich is the world's first spirits brand, whose whiskey waste-to-fuel program is powering its truck fleet with self-produced biogas. "It's very important for the food and drinks industry to make sure that we're sustainable, especially with transport."

"Taking our distilling waste products and turning them into RNG to fuel our vehicles is having a hugely positive impact on our carbon emissions," **Kirsty Dagnan**, site leader of the Glenfiddich Distillery at Dufftown in Moray, Scotland, explained. "Doing this has reduced our CO2 emissions by 95% - 99% when compared to using fossil fuels like diesel. We're moving vehicles around the country and around the world, and it's our responsibility to make sure we do that in a sustainable way."

“RNG is exciting because it’s sustainable, and with all the climate concerns and changes today, I think it’s really important for the City of Topeka to be among the first wave of municipalities to fully embrace this type of movement forward,” said Topeka wastewater engineer **Michelle Neiswender**, who managed implementation of an RNG production project at the City’s largest wastewater treatment plant. “My hope is that other mid-size cities are going to say ‘Topeka did this, we need to do the right thing, we need to also be looking at ways to help the environment out as well as our bottom line,’” said Topeka Director of Utilities Braxton Copley.

“We’re proud to be creating and operating circular solutions for organic waste that help the world transition to a more efficient and sustainable model,” said Bill Caesar, president of the waste-to-value division of Generate Capital, an investment and operating platform founded in 2014, that builds, owns, operates and finances climate solutions in the renewable energy, water, waste and transportation sectors. Today, it operates over 2,000 sustainable infrastructure assets. Its growing network of digesters is collectively among the largest processors of organic waste in North America, turning over 275,000 tons of food waste a year into renewable natural gas, electricity, and fertilizer.

“Generate was designed from day one to address the barriers to deploying sustainable infrastructure at the scale and scope required to meet today’s climate challenges, and our portfolio of organic waste solutions exemplifies that,” Caesar said. “Capturing and destroying methane which would have otherwise gone straight into the atmosphere from the organic waste sector, and displacing fossil fuels in the process, is an exciting way to keep us moving toward those goals.”

These 2021 Energy Vision awardees are in the vanguard of a growing trend toward RNG adoption in the US and abroad. In the U.S. approximately 200 RNG-producing projects are currently operational, up from just 60 five years ago. Another 120 are under development.

“RNG is not ‘on the horizon;’ it’s a here-and-now fuel, whose production and use are growing fast,” said **Matt Tomich**, Energy Vision’s President. “More and more municipal governments, farmers and companies are harnessing the huge volume of organic waste that this country produces. And the more methane we capture and use, the more emissions go down.”

“Methane is a highly potent greenhouse gas, and, according to the global scientific community, methane emissions must be cut deeply to keep warming within 1.5 degrees and avoid the worst impacts of climate change,” said Energy Vision founder **Joanna Underwood**. “Most of our country’s methane emissions come from waste management and agriculture, not fossil fuels. So the waste-to-fuel strategy is critical for reaching our climate goals.”