

ENERGY FUTURES

How Can We Achieve Energy Independence?

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Introduction

"America is addicted to oil, which is often imported from unstable parts of the world."

President George W. Bush
State of the Union Address
January 31, 2006

"You won't hear me say this too often, but I couldn't agree more with the explanation that Sen. McCain offered a few weeks ago. He said, 'Our dangerous dependence on foreign oil has been 30 years in the making, and was caused by the failure of politicians in Washington to think long term about the future of the country.'"

Senator Barack Obama
cnn.com
August 4, 2008

"The United States imported about 58% of the petroleum, which includes crude oil and refined petroleum products, we consumed during 2007. About half of these imports came from the Western Hemisphere. Our dependence on foreign petroleum is expected to decline in the next two decades. We imported only 16% of our crude oil and petroleum products from the Persian Gulf countries of Bahrain, Iraq, Kuwait, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and United Arab Emirates."

Energy Information Administration
Department of Energy
August 4, 2008

Approach 1: "Drill, Baby, Drill!"

Develop Domestic Energy Exploration and Infrastructure

We have billions...perhaps trillions...of dollars worth of oil and natural gas in known reserves at a time we are exporting hundreds of billions of dollars each year to foreign countries to buy energy. This is the largest transfer of wealth in the history of humanity. We should keep more of our dollars in the United States, lessen our foreign dependency, and reduce our trade deficit. Especially when our people and our economy are hurting, we need to draw on all of our own reserves of oil and natural gas.

What Can Be Done?

- Drill for oil everywhere it's found in amounts that make it economical to tap it...no limits!
- Make the construction of the Alaska natural gas pipeline a very high priority
- Use new technology to re-open older wells that were abandoned, but still have reserves

People Who Agree with this Approach Say....

- America's unwillingness to develop domestic sources is contributing to higher energy costs for all consumers and a slow-down in the economy when we can least afford it
- We need to stop purchasing so much foreign oil, sending massive amounts of money to people who don't like us very much...this is a matter of national security!

People Who Disagree with this Approach Say....

- This is just a strategy by the oil, natural gas, and coal companies along with automakers to keep us addicted to fossil fuels so they can make more profit with no change in sight

A Possible Tradeoff Is....

- I'd like to see more domestic oil development, EVEN IF I have to actually pay more for gasoline, electricity and natural gas

Approach 2: "Make a New Plan, Stan!"

Develop Current Alternative Sources until New Technologies Emerge

The United States needs a new energy plan...one that focuses our attention on alternative and green energy technologies. We can't keep doing the same things and expecting a different result...that's how some people define "insanity." The United States is known for its innovation and creativity, so we can decide to replace old technology and old dependencies with new, green technology and no dependencies. Until these new technologies emerge, some alternative sources can buy us some time for research, development and application.

What Can Be Done?

- Support the "Pickens Plan" to supply our electrical needs mostly with wind power and our transportation needs mostly with natural gas
- Give tax incentives to ensure 10% of our electricity comes from renewable sources by 2012, and 25% by 2025
- Create a 'Balanced Energy Portfolio' with tax incentives for innovations in greener technologies to include clean coal, nuclear, wind, solar, hydroelectric, geothermal, etc.

People Who Agree with this Approach Say....

- The United States is the 'Saudi Arabia of wind power'...so let's tap this abundant source
- Green jobs and green technology can be developed and deployed...the United States can become a leader in a global, green economy

People Who Disagree with this Approach Say....

- The Pickens Plan (and others like it) will replace one dependency with another, making a few people very rich without any guarantees of adequate funding for research and development in alternative energy technologies

A Possible Tradeoff Is....

- I'd like to see more long-term, green jobs and technology, EVEN IF it means a slower decline in our dependence on foreign oil

Approach 3: “Just Say No!”

Develop a Local Culture of Energy Efficiency and Conservation

Opportunities for energy conservation are increasingly available in almost every application in any setting. Home, school, office, and industrial environments have all benefited from cost-saving and energy-saving innovations. The advantages of energy conservation and increased efficiency are most easily seen on the local level as tons of air-pollutants are avoided and dollars are saved. In addition, local leaders and neighbors can have the most effective influence to bring more people into active conservation efforts, and this reduction in demand can selectively reduce our purchases of fossil fuels from the least stable foreign sources.

What Can Be Done?

- Increase fuel economy standards for trucks and automobiles dramatically...and give tax incentives to put at least 1 million plug-in hybrid cars on the road by 2015
- Create regulated pricing incentives so communities that excel in conservation are rewarded with lower prices...give tax incentives to communities that become energy self-sufficient
- Provide tax incentives and encourage local volunteer mobilization to weatherize every home in America every year as winter approaches

People Who Agree with this Approach Say....

- We know how to treat addiction with serious life-changing intervention...and we know how to set up community support groups for neighbors who need extra motivation or financial assistance so these conservation efforts can be successful
- The only way to get to energy independence is to give up our old energy wasting habits and to adopt a new energy conserving culture...where people want to practice energy conservation to ‘fit in’ among their neighbors

People Who Disagree with this Approach Say....

- It’s naïve to think these steps can change enough energy habits to make any difference, at least in the short-run when people are slow to adopt a new energy culture

A Possible Tradeoff Is....

- I’d adopt efficiency and conservation habits to reduce energy demand, EVEN IF it wasn’t going to bring a financial benefit