

BOTH AN IMPERATIVE AND AN OPPORTUNITY

Robert Borosage and Joel Rogers . South Florida Sun - Sentinel ; Fort Lauderdale, Fla. [Fort Lauderdale, Fla]29 July 2005: 23A.

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ABSTRACT (ABSTRACT)

The Apollo Alliance has outlined a 10-step national agenda of strategic planning and investment that drive for energy independence by the year 2015. It is hard to overstate the benefits of such a project: 3 million new jobs and more than a trillion dollars in new economic activity, the public revenue from which would easily offset project costs. Such a project would bring jobs to our cities through planning, efficiency and conservation projects. The alternative fuels and transportation technologies would breathe new life into Detroit and the Great Plains. Not to mention the untold environmental and health benefits of cleaner air and water and more hospitable work and living environments.

FULL TEXT

Gas prices are up. Demand for oil is up. Americans are dying in Iraq, and dependence on Persian Gulf oil is up. Even the president agrees that catastrophic climate change is a real and present danger. America needs a crash program to achieve energy independence.

Instead, the energy bill now before the Congress displays an abject failure of leadership. New energy for America? Not in this bill.

Our current path is unsustainable. Global competition for oil is soaring while we're growing ever more dependent on foreign oil -- importing over 13.2 million barrels a day. This bill does nothing to reduce that dependence. American soldiers are mired in a war in the region vital to that supply. Imported oil contributes to our unsustainable trade deficits, now over \$1.9 billion a day. Over half our waterways are polluted. Children in cities suffer staggering rates of asthma. We're shipping good jobs abroad.

We have to change course.

The Apollo Alliance has outlined a 10-step national agenda of strategic planning and investment that drive for energy independence by the year 2015. It is hard to overstate the benefits of such a project: 3 million new jobs and more than a trillion dollars in new economic activity, the public revenue from which would easily offset project costs. Such a project would bring jobs to our cities through planning, efficiency and conservation projects. The alternative fuels and transportation technologies would breathe new life into Detroit and the Great Plains. Not to mention the untold environmental and health benefits of cleaner air and water and more hospitable work and living environments.

The Apollo Alliance has united a broad coalition around these goals, from labor leaders to business executives; from the environmental and civil-rights communities, to urban and rural constituencies and their elected leaders.

But new energy for America requires leadership -- and this energy bill is a shameless concoction of special interest

subsidies, largely to big oil and gas producers that actually will leave us more dependent on foreign oil.

The president and Congress had the opportunity to provide good jobs here, put America into the lead in the growth green markets of the future, give our children cleaner water and air, and protect our national security. Instead, they chose business as usual.

It seems likely that the conference report on the Energy Bill will propose a tax package of \$11.5 billion. The amount is insufficient to tackle our energy challenges in any significant way. Worse still, nearly \$3 billion of that tax package will go to sustain oil and gas companies in importing and processing foreign oil, rather than spurring the development of alternative fuels, renewable sources, energy efficiency and advanced technologies that would make us energy independent.

With the president's default, our best hope rests with the states and municipalities. Already, progressive governors and state legislators have started to pass groundbreaking legislation that lowers our energy consumption, creates jobs, increases our security and better maintains the health of our environment and our children.

In April, Washington Gov. Christine Gregoire signed into law state Senate Bill 5509 making Washington the first state in the country to adopt high performance green building standards for all state-funded buildings over 5,000 square feet. The measure, passed with overwhelming bipartisan support, will lower the public sector's energy demands and costs, create a healthier environment for students and workers, and add new higher-skilled jobs in the construction industry.

Pennsylvania Gov. Ed Rendell recently signed Pennsylvania's Advanced Energy Portfolio Standard, which requires 18 percent of the state's energy to come from clean or renewable sources. Aside from diversifying Pennsylvania's energy resources this measure will cut energy costs, encourage technological development and promote economic growth.

Still other states and regions are pioneering new ways to engage and tackle the complexities of a changing energy landscape.

The original Apollo project was launched by President Kennedy, who promised to put a man on the moon in a decade. It summoned up the creativity and drive of Americans. Now we need a similar drive to provide new energy for America and eliminate our dependence on foreign oil. The states can show the way – but in the end the president and the Congress must either lead or get out of the way. This is a national security imperative and an economic opportunity that cannot be ignored.

Robert Borosage and Joel Rogers are co-founders of the Apollo Alliance.

DETAILS

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