

# The National Requirement for Energy Independence

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Comments to the Pennsylvania Senate Majority Policy Committee

October 22, 2019

The Majority Policy Committee of the Pennsylvania Senate has requested my thoughts on conservative approaches to renewable energy. I am pleased to provide the Committee with some reflections on this subject.

I began my career in national security affairs at the University of Pennsylvania. I was a Naval Aviator in the active reserve; I was an assistant to Henry Kissinger for eight years; I served as United States Secretary of the Navy from 1981-1987 under President Reagan, and I was a member of the 9/11 Commission after the terrible Jihadist attacks on the World Trade Center. During this career the US has been involved in violent conflicts in the Middle East almost without respite; in Lebanon, Syria, Egypt, Kuwait, Iraq, Afghanistan, The Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Iran and elsewhere we have, up to today been sacrificing American blood and treasure decade after decade primarily because of our existential dependence on Mid-East oil.

As a member of the 9-11 Commission, I direct you to our findings and conclusions, including those on oil and the Middle East. We found that the importation of oil and the considerable economic growth that it had fostered in Saudi Arabia and throughout the Arabian peninsula had enabled investment by Wahabist and Salafist religious groups in fundamentalist interpretations of Islam. This radical theology, often advocating violent Jihad, taught and exported with American oil dollars, had been merged with anti-Western and anti-American political ideologies. Indoctrinated with these teachings, and absent any real democratic means of participation in their own repressive governments, the 9-11 hijackers externalized their hate with raw destruction and death on that tragic September day. That is why we urged the Nation and our leadership to end our utter dependence on Mid East oil, the direct cause of our hemorrhaging of blood and treasure.

We urged that America must begin producing its own energy in much greater amounts, so that it would not be hostage to the geopolitics of a region fraught with war, repression, ethnic and religious grievances. It would have been hypocritical of me while urging this course on my fellow Americans not to practice what I had preached, so I invested in solar energy on my farm in Bucks County.

In 2018, I joined the Leadership Council of the Pennsylvania Conservative Energy Forum, an organization committed to more diverse markets and greater production in the Commonwealth.

Thankfully, I was not the only Pennsylvanian to take the domestic energy challenge seriously. Since 2001, Pennsylvania has built the nation's 2nd largest natural gas production and exportation system, essentially from scratch. Pennsylvania now leads the Northeast as net exporter and producer of energy, with the nation's most diverse energy portfolio. Our renewable sector is currently growing at a rate of more than 6% annually, and we have created more than 90,000 jobs in renewables like wind, solar,

biomass and hydro. Nationally, the development of petroleum resources and the transition from coal to natural gas has made the United States the global leader in energy. In Pennsylvania, we have eliminated more than 25 million short tons of carbon annually from the high point of our emissions in 2008, due to expanded natural gas and renewable production.

In my own Bucks County alone there are now several thousand solar arrays producing clean and reliable energy. PECO is currently processing more than 250 applications for solar per month in just the five eastern counties of Pennsylvania. We are helping to lead the way in the right direction.

It is only through our transition to a more diverse, robust and renewable energy portfolio that we have withstood the call to more wars in the Middle East. A decade ago, the recent Iranian attacks on the oil fields of Saudi Arabia would have compelled American intervention as the attack in Kuwait did in '91, as our need to import oil has in so many other Middle Eastern battlefields of the last two decades. But I am pleased to say that the nation has listened to the recommendations we made, and our American energy industries have led the way. Today, as we embark on a new era of American energy independence, we can seize the high ground of increased, clean and diverse energy production. Our new export markets support American allies abroad, and simultaneously create more jobs and economic development here at home. This is the type of change that we desperately needed almost two decades ago, as we cleaned the ashes from our eyes, and vowed "never again." Clean and renewable energy, as a part of "all of the above", can and should be our calling card.

My old boss, President Reagan upheld both security and preservation in a decade of national renewal. In 1984, at a speech before the National Geographic Society, the President said:

What is a conservative after all but one who conserves, one who is committed to protecting and holding close the things by which we live. Modern conservatives in America want to protect and preserve the values and traditions by which the Nation has flourished for more than two centuries ([Reagan Presidential Library, 2019](#)).

Ronald Reagan, a great man and a great President, would be proud to see the progress we have made. Let's declare it as a truly conservative accomplishment and keep the momentum going until we achieve and maintain complete energy independence.