

Energy Independence

Each year, Americans are becoming increasingly concerned about energy and the world's energy supply, which is understandable considering through 2025, total U.S. energy consumption is expected to increase more quickly than U.S. domestic energy supply.¹ As a result, more imports of energy will be needed to fill the discrepancy between supply and demand of oil. Because much of the world's oil supply is produced in restrictive markets of unstable and hostile nations, the United States faces serious challenges for the nation's economy and national security.

Western Skies Coalition understands that there are growing problems with America's energy supply, which are complicated by many laws and regulations regarding energy and energy policy in the United States. In order for the United States to rely less on foreign oil, the conflicting policies that have been enacted need to be updated in order for America to have the ability to meet its energy needs.

Foreign Dependence

Not only does the United States depend on foreign oil, but also its dependence on foreign oil is expanding each year. For example, the Energy Information Administration expects world oil demand to grow from 80 million barrels per day in 2003 to 98 million barrels per day by 2015 and to 118 million barrels per day by 2030. This will place additional strains on America's pursuit of energy independence. In 1973 during the Arab oil embargo, the United States imported 35 percent of its oil. By 1995, America's dependence on foreign oil had grown to 45 percent, and today it rests at 61 percent.²

U.S. Energy Production

It is vital that the United States increase its domestic supplies of energy. Current laws prohibit drilling and exploration in many promising areas and, even when drilling is not prohibited entirely, it is subject to many complex and expensive requirements that hinder energy production. Western Skies Coalition is committed to promoting the following recommendations to Congress and to the American people:

- Remove the limits placed on new oil and natural gas exploration.
- Restructure the burdensome requirements placed on energy production.
- Eliminate special treatment of various fuel sources.
- Encourage competition in the market for ethanol.³

U.S. Coal Reserves

More than half of the electricity consumed each year in the United States is produced from the 1.1 billion tons of coal used annually. The United States is often referred to as "the Saudi Arabia of coal," having enough coal reserves to meet more than 200 years of domestic coal demand. As of September 2007, the United States had about 957 billion tons in coal reserves on federal lands. Approximately 550 billion tons of the coal is located in the Powder River Basin in Wyoming and Montana.⁴

U.S. Natural Gas Reserves

Natural gas provides roughly a quarter of the nation's total energy supply. According to the 2006 Annual Energy Review produced by the Energy Information Administration, natural gas consumption increased about 30 percent between 1985 and 2005. However, during this same period, natural gas supply has stagnated. The United States is suffering because past government policies have discouraged the development of domestic natural gas supplies while, at the same time, encouraging natural gas consumption.⁵

Energy Efficiency

The United States often is labeled one of the most wasteful nations on earth when it comes to energy. Although Americans must continue to be energy efficient and conserve energy, the United States has demonstrated many tremendous strides in energy efficiency in recent decades:

- The United States is 52 percent more efficient in its use of oil today than it was in 1973.
- Homes built today use 50 percent less energy than those built before 1973.
- From 1980 to 1990 the amount of energy needed to produce a dollar of GNP fell by 21 percent while per capita energy consumption fell by 7 percent.⁶

Talking Points

- Washington needs to create policies that allow for more energy production in the United States, while still protecting infrastructure and the environment.
- The United States must be willing to engage internationally to create conditions where free enterprise can prosper and flourish. This will help combat America's dependency on foreign oil.
- The U.S. must continue to support research of renewable energy because, before long, the finite stores of coal, oil and natural gas will need to be replaced with renewable energy sources.

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 5. "Current Natural Gas Situation," American Petroleum Institute, 2007.
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