



## **25x'25 Leaders Say Now is the Time for a National Comprehensive Energy Plan**

*Editor's note: The following is the third in a series of monthly feature stories from 25x'25 that highlight the challenges and opportunities presented by the pursuit of a renewable energy future. We encourage all partners to use all or any part of this feature in your internal or external communications. Media recipients should feel free to use this material in your efforts to cover this vastly complex issue.*

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Four-dollar-plus gasoline, concerns about changes in the earth's climate, the depletion of the world's petroleum resources and the search for sustainability are all factors driving calls from many arenas for a comprehensive national energy plan. While most agree that a strategy must be developed to bring energy costs under control and combat climate change, regional differences and the energy resources they represent are making it difficult to reach consensus.

The differences were never more evident than during the annual meeting of the National Governors Association meeting in Philadelphia this week. It was not partisan differences that precluded the governors from reaching agreement on a plan to reduce the nation's dependency on foreign oil and develop more renewable energy sources. The bigger hurdle was presented by concerns about the costs of regulating greenhouse gases by leaders of states that produce oil and coal, which contribute to climate change.

Nonetheless, there are dozens of efforts underway across the country generated by universities, think tanks and institutions to develop proposals for a comprehensive energy plan to be ready for a new administration that will take over the White House next January. Earlier this week the U.S. Chamber of Commerce joined in the call for a new national energy plan when their Institute for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Energy issued an open letter to the next president.

The letter, which was signed by a wide range of former and current policy leaders, including former Secretaries of State Henry Kissinger and Colin Powell, former Clinton White House Chief of Staff Mack McLarty, former National Security Advisor Bud McFarlane, and former CIA Director James Woolsey, calls for a policy that would, among other steps, aggressively promote energy efficiency; significantly increase funding for research, development, and demonstration of advanced clean energy technologies; increase renewable sources of electricity; and modernize and protect the U.S. energy infrastructure.

A growing number of policymakers contend there is little time to wait, calling for immediate steps that will lead to a boost in domestic energy supplies from diverse sources. President Bush this week took the symbolic step of reversing an executive order issued in 1990 by his father, President George H. W. Bush, banning offshore drilling for oil and natural gas. Congress would

have to adopt legislation that would actually allow drilling on the U.S. outer continental shelf, as well as in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, though many in the Democratic majority on Capitol Hill oppose drilling in these areas because they deem them too environmentally sensitive, and contend they would provide too little, too late.

### **Congress has plan in hand**

While some of the responses to the ongoing energy crisis draw division and may leave gaps in their approach, Congress has in hand a comprehensive strategy that reduces American dependence on foreign oil, provides a boost to the economy, particularly in rural areas, and enhances the environment by relying on low-carbon or no-carbon power sources, says Bart Ruth, a member of the National 25x'25 Steering Committee and chairman of the organization's legislative affairs subcommittee.

*The 25x'25 Action Plan: Charting America's Energy Future* is a document offered to congressional leaders last year that provides 35 policy recommendations that will accelerate renewable energy research and development, and begin the nation's reclamation of its own energy future, said Ruth, a Nebraska corn and soybean producer who is a former president of the American Soybean Association.

"America is in urgent need of a comprehensive energy policy," said Ruth. "The policies currently in place to develop and nurture non-fossil fuel based energy sources have been short term and in many cases intermittent. Such on-again, off-again policies have made long-term investment in new technologies and interest in renewable energy difficult to maintain."

Additionally, says Ruth, the *25x'25 Action Plan* has the benefit of targeting a goal codified in federal law. The Energy Independence and Security Act of 2007, signed into law by President Bush last December, includes provisions that set 25x'25 as a new energy future. The law calls for America's farms, ranches and forestlands to provide the renewable resources that can meet 25 percent of our nation's energy needs by 2025, while continuing to provide affordable, safe and abundant supplies of food, feed and fiber.

"Our action plan was developed utilizing input from dozens of agricultural, conservation and environmental organizations," Ruth points out. "As a result, it is a very balanced plan; promoting sustainability, efficiency, and development of new energy sources from our nation's land base." He also notes that the facilitated discussions that led to the development of the *25x'25 Action Plan* have led to the incorporation of ideas from a very diverse group of interested parties, giving it a very broad approach to a new energy future.

### **The plan comes at relatively little cost**

The *25x'25 Action Plan* lays out recommendations that accelerate renewable energy production, say alliance leaders. By using current renewable energy expenditures, combined with new spending over five years of \$65 million – about five percent of the \$1.2 billion the United States currently spends *each day* on foreign crude oil - the action plan calls for a national goal for research, development, demonstration, and deployment that would reduce the costs of renewable energy production by at least 45 percent by 2025.

Under this reconfiguration of funding priorities, spending on research and development should be sharply increased to sustainably increase agricultural and forestry crop energy yields while

enhancing environmental benefits. Work would be undertaken to harvest, store, transport and utilize biomass feedstocks; and improve cellulosic ethanol and other cellulosic biofuel processing pathways. The recommendations would help develop industrial, commercial, residential and other stationary applications for renewable energy, while further lowering the costs of wind, solar, geothermal and other forms of renewable electricity. The funding would help develop small-scale and distributed energy technologies, and produce supplementary biobased products that create additional value.

Read Smith, a co-chairman of the National 25x'25 Steering Committee, says the benefits of adopting the action plan and achieving 25x'25 are vast. He cited a University of Tennessee study shows an increase of \$700 billion in new economic activity annually by 2025; a boost to farm income of \$180 billion, including \$37 billion in 2025 alone; the creation of four to five million new jobs; a reduction in oil consumption by 2.5 million barrels per day – 10 percent of U.S. projected consumption in 2025; and a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 1 billion tons – two thirds of projected emissions growth by 2025.

### **Action needed now**

"We are going from where we are to a much more diverse energy supply in this country," says Smith. "As important as it was to have a plan in place yesterday, it is even more important to create an effective strategy now. Had we addressed this issue some years ago it might not be so critical today. Our elected leaders need to lead on an energy plan and lead now."

Smith also points out that the addition of renewables to any energy portfolio will reduce the carbon footprint of that mix. "The *25x25 Action Plan* identifies critical bottlenecks in the research, development, production, distribution and marketing of new, renewable energy sources," he says. "The plan will accomplish both the increase in the amount of domestically produced, clean renewable energy and will also assist our country in meeting our global responsibility by reducing our climate change emissions.

The 25x'25 Steering Committee leader says a new administration in the White House must make improving energy security an urgent priority. And the first step towards accomplishing this objective, Smith says, is for policy makers to collaborate with energy stakeholders in developing a comprehensive energy plan. "The 25x'25 Alliance stands ready to support such an initiative and the guidelines and policy recommendations outlined in the *25x'25 Action Plan* are building blocks for a plan to reshape our nations' energy future," Smith says.

"Our action plan is not a knee jerk reaction to political pressure to respond or produce progress," he adds. "It is a well-researched consensus document compiled by engaged professionals from all communities. We expect that national policy developed by a new administration should go well beyond what we have developed. In the renewable arena, we have accurately identified the necessary success components that a new national energy plan should adopt."

### **What the candidates propose**

Republican presidential candidate, Sen. John McCain (AZ) has recently made drilling offshore and in Arctic National Wildlife Refuge for oil and natural gas a principle part of the energy plan he would pursue if he was elected into the White House. However, the McCain campaign also acknowledges the promise of ethanol and second-generation cellulosic ethanol "as both an alternative to gasoline and as a means of expanding consumers' choices." McCain says he will

push for "an even-handed system of tax credits" for wind, solar and hydropower "that will remain in place until the market transforms sufficiently to the point where renewable energy no longer merits the taxpayers' dollars." He is also calling on automakers to exceed their stated goal of making 50 percent of their cars flex-fuel vehicles by 2012.

His Democratic opponent, Sen. Barack Obama (IL), says he would invest \$150 billion over 10 years to advance the next generation of biofuels and fuel infrastructure, accelerate the commercialization of plug-in hybrids, promote development of commercial-scale renewable energy, invest in low-emissions coal plants, and begin the transition to a new digital electricity grid. Obama would also double science and research funding for clean energy projects, including those that make use of our biomass, solar and wind resources, and would use proceeds from a cap-and-trade auction program he is proposing to invest in job training and transition programs to help workers and industries adapt to clean technology development and production.

Regardless of who occupies the White House next year, Smith says a bipartisan effort will be needed to overcome the challenges presented by the current energy crisis. "We stand ready to support the bipartisan commitment necessary to develop comprehensive energy strategy," he said.

For more information about the 25x'25 Initiative, go to [www.25x25.org](http://www.25x25.org). To read and download a copy of the 25x'25 Action Plan, go to [www.25x25.org/actionplan](http://www.25x25.org/actionplan).

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*The National 25x'25 Alliance is a coalition of more than 700 agricultural, forestry, environmental, business, labor, energy, government, civic and faith-based organizations that calls on America's farms, ranches and forestlands to provide 25 percent of the energy consumed by 2025 to come from land-based resources – biomass, biofuels, wind energy, solar power, geothermal energy and hydropower – while continuing to provide a safe, affordable and abundant supply of food, feed and fiber.*

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