

It is still the economy, stupid: How to solve our energy problems once and for all!

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One of the critical success factors in this election is – who will win over independent voters? As usual, there is one issue, and one issue alone: How will the next President affect my pocketbook?

It is still The Economy.

Although there are many more issues that are significantly more important, the biggest single metric for the economy is the price of gas. It's something voters are reminded of 2 to 5 times a month; every time they fill-up their gas tank. It affects their other habits: Dining out, buying Christmas presents, taking vacations (ha!) and for far too many: choosing between buying medication or eating or paying rent.

I believe that whichever candidate talks about the *future*, about logically addressing our energy problems – for the short term *and* long term – will be the winner in this year's election.

Both candidates rely on their party's conventional wisdom (read party positioning) to talk about this long-standing, national-security problem. Neither is offering a truly balanced approach. Surprisingly, Paris Hilton's plan seems to connect more with the common voter than either candidate.

Currently, Obama offers a comprehensive energy "plan", but it contains the same old partisan aspects that inflame conservatives (and independents) against him: No drilling for US oil, \$1000 rebate to deal with high gas prices and \$7000 tax credit to buy fuel-efficient cars. (This is our money!) And he wants to tap the strategic oil reserve. He ridicules McCain's plan. Obama wants a windfall profits tax and to further regulate commodities traders. This is anti-capitalist.

Currently, McCain offers a simple energy "Lexington" plan that doesn't invest enough in renewable energy technologies. He ridicules Obama's plan, but inflating tires could actually save millions of gallons of gas - on an on-going basis. He even promoted a "gas tax holiday." McCain is seen as "in the pocket of" oil companies, and painted with the same brush as President Bush.

Neither gentlemen deal with our broken research-to-commercialization mechanisms. And this is the crux of the problem.

For both gentlemen, I have one question: "And then what?"

If Obama taps into the strategic oil reserve, *what happens after this is depleted?* It's called "strategic" for a reason: In case of a national emergency. Like we're being invaded. Not "Gas is getting to be almost as high as it is in Europe."

If McCain were successful with the gas tax holiday, *then what?* How does that help reduce our oil addiction? It doesn't.

Intelligent American voters want *leadership* in our elected officials. What is a leader? *A leader creates an environment for others to be successful.* That is, create the playing field where both short and long-term solutions can be created, using American innovation: We can neither drill nor tax our way out of this situation. Both have been tried. Both have failed.

How do we solve our energy problems, once and for all? Only by assessing what has happened over the past 35 years (since the last wake-up call, in the form of the OPEC-led oil embargo) to see what worked, what didn't and most importantly, *why*. Then taking bi-partisan actions to address it.

My book, *The 21st Century Energy Initiative* provides a unique and compelling argument about what we, as a nation, need to do to solve this once and for all. More information about this Initiative can be found at <http://www.energy2025.com/21stEnergyInitiativeBook.pdf>. An excerpt – "*The Presidential Speech I'd Like to Hear*" can be found at www.energy2025.com.

Significant shifts in our thinking and behavior is needed to overcome this grand challenge. Not business as usual or government as usual. As Obama would say, this is neither a red state nor blue state issue. It is an American Issue. And we need American *leadership* on this issue...

Independent voters will then make the decision as who will be the next president of these United States.