

Power To Solve Energy Crisis Is The People

Seven, a number common to many texts of antiquity, has long referred to completeness and the promises of renewal.

In these frightening economic times of perhaps biblical proportion, this seventh final column on the worldwide energy crisis arrives on the eve of exercising the greatest joy, privilege and duty of those longing for freedom, sustainable peace and prosperity. An informed electorate can rescue us from the addictive sovereignty-sucking grip of dependence on the “mélange spice” of foreign fossil fuels. Ramping the amperage of our knowledge assures the future of this grandest of experiments, America.

The answer to the multiple choice montage of conquering the energy crisis is no mystery; it's “E”, all of the above. Off shore drilling, natural gas and biogas, solar, wind, nuclear power, better batteries, tides and currents, clean coal, shale oil, hydrogen and geothermal all have a role.

Mother earth's black blood is finite. Squeezing shale, seducing tarry sands, tapping arctic tundra and energy shopping at continental grocery shelves will not suffice. Further dependence on this dwindling resource reaps environmental and political pollution; witness the hastily cobbled cartel between our pals Russia and Iran. Offshore and ANWAR drilling is wise. Drilling into our leader's heads to lead is wiser.

The answer is not simply blowing in the wind. Energy demand is constant; winds are not. Improved battery technology is needed, on line backup is required and enormous investment in transmission infrastructure brings additional aesthetic challenges. Remember, the hot air from bazillionaires with outstretched self serving hands and saints' in waiting such as Al Gore and Michael Moore are not the fair winds of paradise needed to power this nation.

Natural gas may wean us from courtships of unstable regimes, especially in electricity generation and transportation. Furthermore, burgeoning domestic supply estimates buttressed by better access techniques could bode well for US trade. Nonetheless, “In gas we trust” must not echo through congressional halls in a political world prone to hyperbole and hot air.

Solar power is not a cure all. There are issues of storage and transmission. But as engineers break assumptions and legislators broker new incentives, solar power will play a crucial role in the world's energy future. It is a joules and jobs generator.

Nuclear power is a cost effective, long lasting and safe form of almost renewable energy. First, we must irradiate the ignorance and mythology squelching its enormous utility. Recycling breeder reactors have almost no waste, cannot explode or meltdown and fuel is abundant.

Consider this before voting. New technologies winnow when politics poison patents and partisanship mockingly parades as patriotism. The verdict is in; seeking to “legislate” against the nature of man by redistributing wealth is trying to administratively allocate aptitude. This idiocy breeds idiocy, anger and apathy and silences technological advancements. Furthermore, the energy crisis is not to be solved by individual states deep in debt that, unable to write a timely budget or balance their bills, broker their future by floating bonds that will sink the ship of state.

Weaning the world from the teats of fossil fuel tyrants is a top tier national security issue. Profoundly strong battle tested leadership will be necessary. Pedigrees and pasts redolent with intoxicating ivy, dubious judgments and associations and spiced with rhetoric and intimations of messianic deliverance will not suffice. Changing the chessboard through a non-partisan comprehensive energy technology that can be distributed worldwide enfeebles the power of fossil fuels. Soon the new addiction will become freedom, capitalism and peace.

This series of seven has discerned the promises of at least six sources for energy which must be orchestrated so their talents match the terrain. The most magnificent seventh will always remain the power of free and informed citizens, who when energized and animated, light the way where true leaders can shine.

Dr. Kevin Ryan is a retired colonel, physician, musician and author who lives in Fairfield. Reach him at ryan_k@comcast.net.