

OBAMA Environment and Energy Platform Meeting
Ed and Sue Fenimore Residence, Santa Fe, New Mexico
July 25, 2008

The July 25th Santa Fe New Mexico Platform Meeting on Environment and Energy addressed four areas: energy efficiency, mass transit, citizen input on energy policy, and the habitat.

ENERGY EFFICIENCY

The Democratic Party must place the United States in a world leadership role in achieving sustainable, renewable energy systems within the next 8 years. The Party must announce a national plan to build sustainable, non-nuclear, renewable energy systems on the scale of Roosevelt's New Deal, Kennedy's New Frontier, and Johnson's Great Society. We envision that plan to include the following:

1. 100% Renewal Electricity: 100% of the Nation's Electricity will be derived from sustainable, renewable, non-nuclear energy sources within 10 years. There is no such thing as clean coal. The federal government should not support coal technology development as stated in Paragraphs 1 and 7 of Section 2 of the current Obama Energy Plan. All government subsidies, construction loans, loan guarantees, and tax incentives to the coal and nuclear power industries should be eliminated. These are mature industries.

2. Public Electric Power Grid: Make the Electric Power Grid public, similar to the nation's public highway system. Call it the "Public Electric Power Highway." Once reconfigured, following the lead set by the Netherlands, Denmark, and other countries, the Public Electric Power Highway would be the centerpiece of a national economic revival plan, providing guaranteed opportunities for small, independent businesses to interconnect renewable energy systems and provide renewable energy to their local communities. We do not support the decoupling of utility revenues from energy usage, as stated in the Obama Energy Plan under the title, "Flip Incentives to Energy Utilities."

Provide incentives to utility companies to diversify their energy sources and make their existing energy sources more efficient.

3. Payment for Renewable Energy Added To Power Grid. Adopt a national feed-in tariff system allowing energy producers to access and contribute sustainably and renewable to the Public Electric Power Highway. The national feed-in tariff is intended to provide incentives for local, independent, renewable, sustainable non-nuclear power producers.

4. Nationwide Electric-Based Mass Transit. Electric-based Mass Transit systems will be established between and within population centers in 10 years.

5. Doubled Fuel Efficiency Standards: Double Gas Mileage Fuel Efficiency Standards in 5 years (not 18 years).

We oppose offshore drilling, drilling in the Arctic Wildlife Refuge, drilling on public lands, and drilling in environmentally sensitive areas. Cost savings from such proposals have been shown to be only a few pennies per gallon of fuel and would be unavailable until 2027. The nation needs to have the highest gas mileage standards in the world.

6. National Weatherized and Energy Star Building Efficiency: All new buildings will be weatherized and equipped to Energy Star standards. All existing homes will be weatherized and equipped to Energy Star standards within 10 years. Establish incentives to weatherize and equip all homes and buildings to Energy Star standards within 10 years. Currently 60 to 80% of existing houses in the US are under insulated.

7. Reversed Utility Program Home Funding Priorities. Reverse the funding priorities of the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) to increase weatherization and reduce payments to utilities. Begin insulating existing homes at the bottom of the economic spectrum to counter the regressive nature of high utility bills.

8. Export Clean Technology: Develop vigorous incentives to export clean technology instead of sending dollars abroad to purchase oil.

We question limiting the “Green Jobs Corps” to “disconnected and disadvantaged youth” as stated in Section 2, Paragraph 3 of the Obama Energy Plan. Participation must be open to all.

MASS TRANSIT

Reducing the need for automobiles in urban and suburban areas will result in a significant decrease of energy use. All daily services and functions offered in a city should be as conveniently accessible without a car as they are with a car. Urban dwellers should have a true choice between owning and using a car, and using public transportation.

Subsidies and incentives should be established to

- a) create a tight network of public transportation as an effective alternative for everyone.
- b) obtain and maintain comfortable, energy-conserving mass transit vehicles.
- c) promote urban renewal to make cities more attractive and livable

We recommend that the Department of Transportation should mandate:

- (a) public transportation coverage standards for cities based on the ideas above as well as size and morphology,
- (b) coordination of local and regional transit systems (example of the Netherlands where city buses, trains and long-haul country buses all have coordinated schedules, and you can make a single itinerary on the web)

CITIZEN INPUT ON ENERGY POLICY

Recommend: The formation of a National Citizens Energy Board, by Executive Order, to conduct energy studies, facilitate education and outreach, to contribute to peer review of energy policy and technology, and to assist in the drafting of legislation. The benefits would be:

- (1) overcome inertia to bring in new technology policy,
- (2) take energy policy out of the hands of special interests,
- (3) involves citizens in energy decision making, and
- (4) promotes most effective policies and technologies

Position Statement: A National Citizens Energy Board puts energy policy in the hands of citizens and creates an effective counter balance to special interests

THE HABITAT

We support the policy statement on water from Barck Obama: Leadership for New Mexico. Though the problems of water might be most critical in the American West, solutions might need to encompass states beyond the western United States . Thus, we propose the establishment of a National Water Policy Board.

We believe that Climate Change is real and one of our most critical challenges. We believe that protecting and enhancing habitat of our natural species is important to sustain our quality of life and counter the ravages of Climate Change.

We recommend the establishment of a National Tree Planting Program – to be funded through voluntary participation and financial support from American tax payers. More trees would expand critical habitat and combat Climate Change.

A voluntary check-off box would be added to the Individual, Business, and Corporate Federal Tax Return Forms. Trees purchased from these funds would be planted on federal land such as national forests, wilderness areas, and national parks.

We propose that Nature and Natural Systems be given legal standing.

We support land use policies that encourage the expansion of green space, such as cluster development.

We recommend that the study of Natural Systems be added to our school curriculum.