

Obama's Energy Plan: Data Dismisses Doubters

January 27, 11:38 AM

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Reading the news yesterday morning, I came across a quote from Michael Morris, the CEO of American Electric Power, in regards to President Obama's goal of doubling renewable energy in three years. Morris said that as a practical matter, Obama's target is too ambitious.

Interestingly enough, American Electric Power Co. is the largest U.S. producer of electricity from coal. Of course, Morris was quick to note that he was not anti-wind or anti-solar, but rather wasn't sure we could double our renewable energy so quickly.

Rex Tillerson, CEO of ExxonMobil also chimed in on Obama's renewable energy plan, saying that he thinks it'll be very challenging to do. Big shocker there!

Listen: No matter how aggressive Obama's renewable energy policy is, it is unlikely that those who seek to slow progress will ease up. That's just a fact. Some scientist could create a new solar cell tomorrow that's 100% efficient and could be deployed all over the world within three years – and still, guys like Tillerson and Morris will manufacture a new reason why this can't happen. So what do we do in the meantime?

The same thing we've been doing for the past decade – focusing on progress, delivering on our often-criticized goals, and analyzing new, accurate data that supports the benefits of a clean energy economy.

In fact, just this week we got some very encouraging news from the **2009 California Green Innovation Index**, which provides data on the impact of innovation on the state's economic and environmental health as California moves forward to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to 1990 levels. This was mandated by the California Global Warming Solutions Act.

While clean energy opponents have long criticized the growth potential and economic benefits of clean energy, the Index actually found that...

- Since 2005, green job growth has grown by 10 percent, while statewide jobs have increased by only one percent. 20 percent of those jobs were generated in manufacturing.
- Nationally, California is the top-ranking state in alternative fuel vehicle registrations (excluding Flex Fuel vehicles). In 2007, 20 percent of new hybrid registrations in the U.S. were in California.
- From 2002-2007, California led all states in patent registrations for green technologies, thereby increasing the state's total number by 70 percent over a similar period in the early nineties.
- Despite slowing in overall venture capital investment, clean technology investment in California hit an all-time high in 2008 of \$3.3 billion. That's an increase of nearly \$1.5 billion over 2007, and seven times the total clean tech investment in 2005.

- Over 1.5 million jobs have been created as a result of energy efficiency policies forged by California over the last 35 years, generating \$45 billion in payroll.
- California's energy productivity is 68 percent higher than that of the rest of the country. Measured as the ratio of energy consumed (inputs) to GDP (economic output), growth in energy productivity equates to more dollars of GDP generated per unit of energy consumed.
- Power generation from renewable sources increased by 19 percent in California from 2002 to 2007, while total energy generation grew by only 11 percent. Since 2003, the wind power generated in California increased 95 percent.
- California increased grid-connected photovoltaic capacity by 41 percent from 2006 to 2007.
- Public transportation expanded 22 percent from 2005 to 2006, adding over 100.5 million transit service miles.
- Californians, per capita, pay lower utility bills and spend billions less of their state economy as a whole on electricity than the rest of the country due to energy efficiency innovation.
- California's carbon economy has continued a gradual downward trend in the direction of a carbon-free economy, delinking economic growth from greenhouse gas emissions. While GDP per capita has increased by 28 percent in 16 years, gross emission per capita are 10 percent lower than in 1990.

There were plenty of naysayers when California first took the initiative to support clean energy integration and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. But here we are today with some validation that an aggressive move to integrate clean energy generation can contribute to job creation and an overall economic recovery.

Point is, we just have to focus on what needs to be done, instead of what the opposition claims cannot be done. Because at the end of the day, that's all the really matters.