

10/26/2011

Members of the Interim Energy, Environment and Technology Committee:

Thank you for allowing the public to comment on the 2012 draft Energy Plan. First, I am in *complete* agreement with the following premise of the 2012 draft Energy Plan. This all sounds very good.

“With this recognition, this 2012 Idaho Energy Plan re-emphasizes the core objectives of the 2007 energy plan – to set the policy framework that will help enable a secure, reliable, affordable energy supply network while protecting public health and safety and enhancing economic competitiveness, and establish the process by which sound data and debate is regularly engaged to help Idaho stakeholders respond to energy challenges and opportunities.”

“Our focus is centered on three pillars of Idaho’s energy future: 1) Secure, stable, cost-effective supply of electricity, transportation fuels, and energy for industrial, process and space heating; 2) Opportunities for economic development associated with energy production as well as in serving global energy markets through manufacturing and services; and 3) Enhancing our collective, energy IQ – which is critically important for helping our citizens, businesses and policy leaders make informed decisions while exerting national leadership regarding complex energy issues.”

However, the problem lies in how this is being implemented. For example, consider the following statements from “**Section 5.2 Informing The Public and Policymakers**”:

“As Idaho plans for its energy future, Idaho’s citizens, business leaders, and elected officials must have access to complete and unbiased information about our energy choices. Several noteworthy efforts are underway across the state to better inform Idahoans about energy.” [This is good.]

“The Idaho Strategic Energy Alliance (ISEA) is a state government initiative intended to provide state leaders and the public with balanced information about energy in Idaho.” [PROBLEM]

“The Alliance also publishes reports on the website that take an unbiased, scientific look at certain subject areas. The reports are created by about a dozen volunteer task forces in areas such as wind, biofuels, geothermal and hydropower, and energy conservation and efficiency.” [PROBLEM]

To highlight from above “The Idaho Strategic Energy Alliance (ISEA) is a state government initiative intended to provide state leaders...with balanced information about energy in Idaho. The Alliance also publishes reports on the website that take an unbiased, scientific look at certain subject areas. The reports are created by about a dozen volunteer task forces in areas such as wind...” Let’s look at who the Idaho Strategic Energy Alliance Wind Task Force consists of:

Wind Task Force

- Clint Kalich, Avista - Chair
- Rich Rayhill, Ridgeline Energy
- Brian Jackson, Western Community Energy
- Joe Miller, McDevitt & Miller
- Lou Ann Westerfield, Idaho Public Utilities Commission
- Paul Clements, Rocky Mountain Power
- Mark Stokes, Idaho Power Company
- Brian Conrad, John Deere Credit - Wind Energy
- Todd Haynes, Boise State University
- John Ireland, Idaho Department of Commerce
- Scott Kringen, RES America Developments, Inc.
- Steve Enyeart, Bonneville Power Administration

How can this task force be providing “complete and unbiased information” when at least half of its members have a financially vested interest in the success of wind energy and will profit from the billions and billions of federal taxpayer dollars and from our ratepayer dollars? **AND** when the claims they make have *never* been scientifically vetted?

Again, as I stated, the problem lies in the implementation or the process. Here’s another example, let’s say that state legislators decide that it would be a good idea to reduce fossil fuel pollution.

Shortly after declaring their intent to reduce such pollution, the legislators will be deluged by those with a vested financial and/or political interest. These people will be promoting solutions that they want incorporated into the state’s policies and/or legislation.

In general, these people will fall into one of two camps: 1) those promoting *products* (e.g. wind energy) or 2) those promoting *political agendas* (e.g. the Sierra Club).

There is nothing wrong with these people expressing their opinions because after all we live in a Democracy which entitles freedom of speech for all. **However, we must be certain that the claims these people are presenting are TRUE. Because science has a way of approaching technical issues that is a closer approximation of truth than any other method we have, it MUST be employed.**¹

So what is real science? Most people when they hear the word “science” instinctively think of things like Einstein, or complex equations, or experiments.

But NONE of these are what science is.

¹ Dr. Richard Muller quote: <<<http://tinyurl.com/4jr34qy>>>.

When distilled down, science is a **process**. The core science process is the Scientific Method.

Per independent physicist, John Droz Jr:

“When we took science classes in high school, the main purpose was not to prepare us to be scientists, as only a small number of students end up in science careers. The real objective was to show us how to solve problems!”

“We were presented with a hypothesis (a potential solution) and were taught how to properly evaluate this proposed idea to see if was legitimate. What this boiled down to was to perform a: 1) comprehensive, 2) independent (i.e. objective), 3) transparent, and 4) empirical [real world] assessment of the hypothesis.”

“So, since almost all of us were taught this, why aren’t we applying this process to solving our society’s technical problems? Could it really be that we missed the whole point of our science classes? Or are we instead being distracted by such things as the Siren’s call about economic enticements?”

“Whatever the reason is, there is no denying the fact that we are not applying real science to our technical issues.”

So what should be done? Back to the example where legislators want to reduce energy pollution.

As before, legislators are flooded by proposals from those who have a vested financial and/or political interest. What *should* be said in response to these solicitors’ offerings is very simple:

“Thank you for coming forward. Your product (or idea) sounds interesting. However, before we incorporate your suggestion into our energy policy, we require that you provide us a proper scientific assessment that verifies that your solution is cost-beneficial.”

As simple and common-sensical as this sounds, this is not being done. (And by the way, has NEVER been done for wind energy – *anyplace*).

As things stand now, well-intentioned, overburdened legislators are sitting ducks for some of the largest multinational corporations in the world which have spent hundreds of millions of dollars in a PR campaign sugar coating their product (i.e. wind energy). PR experts have cleverly packaged their products as saving the planet, job providers, and PC actions etc., etc. This is what they do best: put spin on. On the other hand, real science is about real world facts and truth.

And please note that using a science-based approach will result in **reduced costs** to the government (citizens) for two reasons. First, the entire burden of proof is shouldered by the **proponent** – that is the way science works. It is not up to the state to pay for proper testing. The proponents of any alternative energy source would be required to provide ALL of the data necessary to make an accurate assessment.

Then the state would do a simple two part assessment:

- 1 did the submission meet the four scientific standards (i.e. comprehensive, independent/objective, transparent, empirical)? [the “comprehensive” element would consist of a technical, economic, and environmental evaluation] (if no, it is rejected), and
- 2 do the cost-benefits make sense for the citizens of Idaho? (if no, it is rejected).

Secondly, going through a scientific assessment process will unequivocally (on average) yield *better* (i.e. quicker, more efficient, less expensive) results.

Again, legislators must have complete confidence that the claims being made are, in fact, **true**. And a science-based approach will provide that. Just to reiterate -- consider this statement from the 2012 Energy Plan:

“The Idaho Strategic Energy Alliance (ISEA) is a state government initiative intended to provide state leaders ... with balanced information about energy in Idaho.”

And consider again who makes up that ISEA wind task force – this is just **one** example. Those who stand to reap HUGE profits will NOT be the unbiased sources of “balanced information” **UNLESS** their product has had a proper scientific assessment and that assessment has been verified. None of which has been done for wind energy.

In conclusion, we must insist that our energy and environmental policies are based on real science. This will be the only way to protect the INTEGRITY of our energy and environmental plans; and the only way to protect citizens when there is so much taxpayer and ratepayer money on the line. And finally, consider this statement from the third pillar of Idaho’s energy future “...make informed decisions while exerting national leadership regarding complex energy issues...” I agree -- let’s have Idaho be a leader for the nation by having our energy and environmental policies driven by real science, rather than driven by those with self-serving financial interests and/or political agendas.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

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