



Setting ^{THE} record straight

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Canada – a terrorist nation??

Canada, a terrorist nation? That's what some left wing activist groups in Pennsylvania would have you believe. In order to secure passage of new taxes and government mandates for alternative energy, the propaganda from these groups has been telling the public that every time they fuel their car, they are supporting terrorism. These groups have even gone so far as to have residents call their lawmakers to tell them that a vote against new energy taxes/mandates is a vote for terrorism.

Well...in reviewing the list of countries that send crude and petroleum products to the United States, our great neighbor to the north, Canada, tops the list. Are there some countries that we'd rather not deal with on the list? Sure. But claiming that fueling your car means you support terrorism is as ridiculous as claiming that buying a DVD made in China means you support communism.

The reality is that developing a comprehensive energy policy and striving for energy independence involves more than just irresponsible sayings that serve only to demonize people and businesses, and polarize our society. The debate involves a real attempt to develop our domestic resources (oil, coal and natural gas) in the most environmentally sound way possible while we continue to develop nuclear power, as well as alternative sources such as wind, solar, biomass, etc.

Conservation and wise use of our energy resources is crucially important as well. However, conservation will likely bring us about a 2 percent to 3 percent reduction, while energy usage is predicted to grow 3 percent to 4 percent. It doesn't take a math major to predict that an energy policy based solely on conservation won't work.

Relying solely on wind and solar would be disastrous as well. These two sources have a reliability rating much lower than conventional sources. The reliability rating for wind is less than 25 percent and drops to 4 percent to 6 percent on days when the wind doesn't blow. (Conversely, conventional sources of electric generation have much higher rates with nuclear at more than 91 percent and coal almost 90 percent.) And like every other energy source, wind and solar present their own environmental concerns, such as the threat posed to birds and bats by wind turbines, the impact on the view shed from these turbines and the land footprint from wind farms and solar panels. In fact, one estimate is that to replace the power output from one conventional coal or nuclear facility would require a wind farm one mile wide that stretches from Philadelphia to Pittsburgh!

With the special session on energy now underway, let's have an energy policy that builds on our strengths, and a debate that is grounded in science and facts – not hysteria, eh?

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The Pennsylvania Chamber of Business and Industry is the state's largest broad-based business association, with its membership representing nearly 50 percent of the private workforce. More information is available on the PA Chamber's website at www.pachamber.org