

“Plan must combine clean energy, conservation.”

The News Journal

December 1, 2012

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“Climate change is in part a result of a natural cycle of nature, but also with a substantial assist from mankind. We can’t do much about Mother Nature, but we can do lots of other things that may slow the process. We desperately need an energy plan that not only encourages production of cleaner energy that does not add further to the warming of our planet, but a plan that also encourages conservation. We must reduce the burning of fossil fuels and the spewing of carbon dioxide that add to the greenhouse effect that is making our planet warmer.

We can increase fuel economy standards, and in the process, thousands of engineers and scientists can be given meaningful jobs that help our economy. The automobile companies already have indicated they are up to the challenge. This will not only reduce fossil fuel use, but it will save consumers money by giving them more bang for the buck.

We should and can, through conservation, reduce the amount of energy we use. All of us need to be a part of the effort. Everyone should do their fair share. For example, turning our thermostats up on hot days and down a touch on cold days will make a difference. Wearing a little extra clothing in winter and less in summer is not too difficult a task.

Another very important element in any credible energy plan is the development of alternative sources of energy: wind, solar, nuclear and natural gas. We have a great deal of natural gas right here in the United States, and it will, in time, help us to reduce the use of coal and oil substantially. In the process, the United States will move away from our dependence on foreign oil from unstable regions in the world. This also makes good sense from the standpoint of national security.

There’s a lot riding on our ability to implement an energy plan that addresses the problems we continue to face. In the meantime, the melting of Arctic ice and glaciers that provide water for half of our planet continues, and that creates enormous problems,

especially in the undeveloped areas of the world. We must reduce the burning of fossil fuels, and America must lead the way.

We recently have seen an increase in the intensity of storms that cause such bad beach erosion and create storm surges that destroy properties and place so many lives at risk. Sandy's devastation should remain forever etched in our minds. Mankind's significant contribution to climate change may be doubted by a few, but it is for real, and we have a profound responsibility to do everything possible to slow the process.

In the meantime, we also need to adapt to the dangers created by increasingly vicious storms. We need to stop encouraging development through government subsidies in storm-prone vulnerable areas. We cannot prevent development, but we should and can say to those developing, "Do it on your own nickel and not the American taxpayers'."

Fortunately, there is an existing law, The Coastal Barrier Resources Act, that prevents subsidies, including Federal Flood Insurance on undeveloped barrier lands along the Atlantic and Gulf coasts. It initially was opposed by many well-funded special interests, but the common-sense approach Congress took in passing the Coastal Barrier Resources Act was not only a tribute to common sense but a fine example of Democrats and Republicans working together to achieve success."