

Newsweek Executive Forum

Issues 2009: How the U.S. Presidential Administration is Shaping Energy Policy

Howard Fineman:

Chief Political Correspondent, Newsweek

This is a very important topic, energy. There is nothing more important. There are other things as important -- whether it is healthcare or the economy, America's relationship with other countries and peoples of the world -- but energy is so basic and so pervasive.

Eleanor Clift:

Contributing Editor, Newsweek

Looking at the ambitious agenda that President Obama has, the conventional wisdom in Washington is that energy does not rise to the level of healthcare, it's bubbling along under the surface and I think we may be shocked at the progress that is made this year. It has got a sense of inevitability about it.

Senator Maria Cantwell:

Washington (D)

The American people are there, if you look at the numbers, the American people want this. They believe that it's going to create jobs. They don't want to be gouged again. Last summer was the last warning, the last straw for them. And many people very much care about the planet and want to diversify.

Robert Pease:

President and CEO, Motiva Enterprises

One of the things we are most pleased about in the new administration, both the administration and congress, is the fact that both energy and climate -- and we need them both -- are so high up on the agenda.

Senator Maria Cantwell:

Washington (D)

We are not, by our own drilling, even in the outer continental shelf, going to affect the price of oil. We're not. So the more we're reliant on that, the more we're going to be subject to the whims and challenges of a global demand and an increase for oil, and we can get a lot further down that road by diversifying. Now, that's not to say that you can't keep drilling on the 60 million acres of already-leased public land, both on shore and off shore. The United States as a policy ought to stop incenting the fossil fuel industry and start incenting green energy so we can move towards that transition. And I'm sure energy companies who have that portfolio will also start following those incentives and start gearing their businesses towards those.

Robert Pease:

President and CEO, Motiva Enterprises

I think one of the important things to realize first of all going back to the basic numbers, is whereas we absolutely support green and renewables and energy conservation, even with dramatic growth -- I mean record levels of growth -- in those fuels, most experts in

government anticipate that between now and 2050 the global demand for hydrocarbon-based fuels, fossil fuels, even with renewables growing 2,300 percent over that period, fossil fuels will be a larger component, that it'll take more barrels or more barrels equivalent of oil, natural gas and coal in 2050 than it does today. So we're not saying don't promote green and don't go after it, but the reality is we're going to have to have more fossil-based fuels. And the fact that the U.S. does not have anywhere near as much oil as other places in the world doesn't mean we want a policy that prohibits us as a country from trying to get energy independence as a stated policy.

**Rep. G.K. Butterfield:
North Carolina (D)**

I think the time is ripe now for the President of the United States to really weigh in on energy conversation. He's basically said to us in the congress "you get it, you fix it, you write legislation. Then we can fill in the details later."

**Eleanor Clift:
Contributing Editor, Newsweek**

The key word is "transformation;" that this is a period where we're getting into a different kind of future. But he [President Obama] has to tell the American people that it's really not going to cost them more, that they're going to be subsidized in some way in the short run, in the long run it will be cheaper and better for the planet. Just as he's framing healthcare around cost, he's got to frame, he's got to take into account people's concerns. Because all the scare tactics on the other side are about how everything is going to cost you so much more.