

Holperin

Senate

the Northern Advantage

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Rhineland Daily News Guest Commentary: “Energy Policy” by Jim Holperin, 12th District State Senate Candidate Sunday, July 27, 2008

I am not running for Congress. I offer that disclaimer by way of explaining why this commentary on energy policy contains no references to offshore drilling, refining, oil futures, strategic petroleum reserves, or any other national energy issues.

I have opinions on those topics, of course, but I am running for *state* Senate and so it is important to acknowledge state government’s limitations in influencing gas prices and the national energy marketplace. To do otherwise would be to behave like a steer in a herd of heifers. Lots of bellowing...but no results.

So while there might not be much Wisconsin by itself can do to reduce gas prices in the short term, there is plenty it can do to assure we are not held hostage time and again whenever international developments conspire to drive gas and oil prices ever higher.

Wisconsin’s main goal, over the next decade, should be to *reduce oil dependency*. Here are some things the legislature should do that I will support:

- *Back Governor Doyle’s “25 x 25” plan to generate 25% of Wisconsin’s energy from renewable sources by 2025.
- *Provide Wisconsin’s new Office of Energy Independence the resources it needs to compete for federal grant dollars which can be used for research into and experimental utilization of solar, wind, geothermal, biogas, cellulosic ethanol and other home-grown energy sources.
- *Lift outdated limits on the ability of electric utilities to consider whether nuclear energy could cost effectively replace oil or gas fired generators.
- *Encourage more energy conservation through tax incentives and energy education.
- *Use tax credits to encourage more private sector investment in high tech energy alternatives like wind, solar and geothermal.

Here are some things I would do:

- *Fight for a fair share of research funding to be invested in northern Wisconsin which is a logical source of biomass to fuel power plants, produce cellulosic ethanol or heat commercial or residential buildings.
- *Support more public transportation in rural areas by sponsoring cooperative efforts of existing organizations to provide services like park-and-ride or van pooling.
- *Remove barriers to public transportation in rural areas by offering state-backed vehicle liability umbrella coverage for organizations which agree to share the use of vans and buses outside their ordinary service areas.
- *Review highway weight limits on certain routes where log trucks could safely haul more wood using less fuel.
- *Fight for a fair share of rural road aids so our highways are better, commutes quicker and routes more direct.
- *Work to assure that every home and business in northern Wisconsin has access to high speed internet service thus allowing more commerce, education and information exchange to be done without driving.

Recent gas price spikes and developments in the world economy make it clear that a goal of *reducing oil dependency* is a smart and visionary priority for Wisconsin.

Fortunately, our state has already made good progress toward this goal. We need to continue to look ahead and invest in the home grown fuel and energy sources of the future, and I am strongly committed to that strategy.