

C O M M E N T S

Florida's Energy Policy: A Model for the Nation

We must increase energy efficiency and conservation, reduce GHG emissions, and expand alternative and renewable energy

by Charlie Crist

Charlie Crist is the governor of Florida.

As our nation transitions into the Barack Obama Administration, we have the unique opportunity to work together to reduce our dependence on foreign oil and help protect our nation from the harmful impacts of climate change. We must develop and implement real solutions—learning from the policies and programs already in place across the nation and the world.

Here in Florida, we have already begun to diversify our energy supplies, reduce harmful emissions, and conserve energy. Energy diversification is vital to our nation's economic development and security. It can help us become more independent of oil from other countries and reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions—issues that are not only an environmental concern, but a matter of national security.

In addition to traditional fuel sources, we must develop alternative and renewable energy, such as biofuels, solar and wind technologies, as well as cleaner sources of energy, such as nuclear. Florida has built upon federal incentives for renewable energy by providing a combination of grants, rebates, and other tax incentives to encourage the development and commercialization of advanced energy technologies. State government, as well as the businesses here in Florida, are realizing there is “gold in green,” and that investing in the clean energy technology sector will help develop reliable energy supplies and increase economic opportunities.

We must also increase energy efficiency and conservation measures. Enhancing and upgrading existing facilities and systems, as well as strengthening requirements for new construction, provides a cost effective move toward a more secure energy future. We can have more energy-efficient building codes; we can increase the performance of our home and commercial appliances; and we can invest in upgrades to our electrical power systems to increase efficiency and conservation at our utilities.

Finally, we must reduce GHG emissions—from our homes, our businesses, and our communities. We can require electric utilities to produce less carbon emissions, by upgrading facili-

ties and diversifying energy sources, including renewables and nuclear. We can adopt stricter motor vehicle emission standards and encourage smarter, more efficient driving practices. And we can further the development of clean, renewable sources of energy that will protect our environment as well as stimulate our economy.

Over the past few years, states across the nation have taken the lead on addressing global climate change. However, we must go one step further and build broad-based, national, and regional coalitions to address energy and climate change policy. Without them, corporations that do business across state lines are challenged by differences in standards and expectations.

Addressing such a complicated issue requires government to work alongside the business, science, and community service sectors. Innovative solutions to our nation's energy and environmental future can happen only as leaders across America bring their expertise to the table. We must recognize the undeniable link between our environment and our economy.

Florida appreciates the unique opportunities and challenges that lie ahead. Over the past two years, we have launched our state to the forefront of the worldwide movement to reduce GHGs and address global climate change. Earlier this year, I signed bipartisan legislation that created the most comprehensive energy and economic development policy in the history of our state, moving Florida forward on its path to diversify our energy sources, increase energy efficiency, reduce harmful GHG emissions, and support the development of renewable energy technologies. It is time for our nation to move forward with a comprehensive energy policy that will protect America's natural beauty for future generations.

I truly believe that global climate change is one of the most important issues we face this century, and we must take action. By increasing energy efficiency and conservation, reducing GHG emissions, and expanding the use of alternative and renewable energy technologies, we can move forward with a new, more secure, and diverse energy future for our nation.