

Statement on Energy and Energy Policy

by Tom Howell

How can energy efficiency improve South Carolina's energy situation?

Improving energy efficiency is the most important thing we can do to reduce our energy problems quickly and improve our energy security.

Improving efficiency is the first step that everyone should take. For most people it is the easiest and most affordable step to take. Everyone should be aware of its importance. Everyone should know the basic facts of energy efficiency. In some cases significant amounts of the energy generated are wasted because of inefficient transmission or inefficient methods of use. Improving efficiency is like discovering new sources of power. Improving energy efficiency is also much cheaper than developing new sources of power.

Energy efficiency makes all methods of power generation more effective, and can help prepare South Carolina for the development of renewable energy methods as the costs and effectiveness of renewable energy technologies improve.

Money invested in energy efficiency produces faster results at less cost and is more effective than most methods of power generation. Money saved through energy efficiency is available to save or to spend or invest in other ways.

Business can benefit in many ways. All businesses can improve profit margins by improving energy efficiency. If our country is to solve energy and climate problems there will be many business opportunities in the fields of energy efficiency and green building, as well as manufacturing, marketing, installing, and managing renewable energy and energy efficiency equipment and features.

Government should be saving on tax expenditures by improving efficiency in all government structures and in all government operations.

Energy efficiency does not depend on waiting for new technologies to develop. Energy efficiency can be done very effectively with existing technology. Using energy efficiency creates energy savings and dollar savings that begin as soon as the efficiency improvements are made.

South Carolina should have a web site to publicize the most effective methods of energy efficiency so that citizens, businesses, and government agencies can incorporate the best methods into their building, maintenance, operation, and development plans.

The state of South Carolina and the business community of the state should embark on an Efficiency Initiative to improve the effectiveness of our energy usage. If done well, such an initiative could save large amounts of money, improve profits, and increase standards of living in the state.

If energy efficiency improvement costs are in the hundreds of dollars per kilowatt, or less, and new power generation costs, especially for nuclear, are in the thousands of dollars per kilowatt then the case for energy efficiency improvement is clear.

What types of renewable sources of energy are available in South Carolina?

South Carolina has large, undeveloped resources of solar power, offshore wind, and ground source geothermal potential. We should be preparing to exploit these resources. Some of that exploitation will be best done when the appropriate technology improves and prices are better. However, to get the most from these resources we must accumulate knowledge, gain experience, and make plans and preparations that will enable us to use these resources as the technology improves. Having trained and experienced technicians is essential. Some of the technology necessary to exploit these resources is already effective and affordable, including green building methods, passive solar construction, and solar heating of hot water.

Solar generation of electricity is already practical in some locations. If the US military can save millions of dollars by using solar generation of electricity, wind power, and ground source geothermal technology, then we should be exploiting those methods. If Germany, which gets less sunlight than South Carolina, can benefit from solar technology – both in power generation and job creation – then South Carolina should exploit its sunlight.

The business opportunities are great and extend, in one way or another, to all parts of the state. Most buildings can use energy efficiency upgrades. Design, manufacturing, distribution, installation, and management of renewable energy technology offer significant profits to businesses and job opportunities to citizens of the state.

Increased use of renewable energy methods offers health benefits from reductions in pollution and dangerous waste associated with conventional methods of power generation. With reductions in health problems and other problems associated with pollution and waste creation come reductions in health and other expenditures. Reduced damage to the environment from pollution can benefit our biological resources, including our fish stocks.

A Solar Initiative, to develop our state's abundant solar resources, can bring jobs, profits, savings, higher standards of efficiency, and improved energy security to homeowners and businesses, along with improvements in cost of operations to government agencies.

As with energy efficiency, a web site clearinghouse for information on the most effective solar and other renewable energy methods, along with information on costs and performance can assist homeowners, businesses, and government agencies in making the best energy decisions.

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