

Reliable, Affordable Energy

An indispensable but neglected civil right

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The American civil rights revolution of the 1950s and 1960s was one of the greatest social and political liberations in the history of mankind. Millions of African Americans gained their civil rights with relatively little violence, in a relatively few years, at a time when America was riding a crest of military and economic power. Other American minorities likewise gained new rights, respect, equality and opportunity.

The French and the Russian revolutions, by contrast, were brutal, bloody affairs that occurred when those countries were reeling from economic and military defeats. Worse, they failed to achieve what they set out to do – and instead ushered new eras of repression and bloodshed.

Why did the American civil rights revolution succeed? A primary reason is that it had a powerful weapon that the French and the Russian revolutions never had – or squandered to base human passions for power and revenge.

The American civil rights revolution was blessed by *a just and tenacious hold on the Moral High Ground, by civil rights revolutionaries who appealed successfully to the moral conscience of the American people.*

It is that Moral High Ground that ensured our victory, and changed America forever.

Today, America's laws and society are vastly different from a half century ago. While there is still antagonism and discrimination among groups in America, it is far less prevalent. More important, racial differences are no longer enshrined in law or consciously sanctioned by government.

Today, in the social, political and economic arenas, opportunities abound. African Americans have achieved new levels of success in virtually every walk of life. Other minorities have also climbed the ladder of success in this great nation of ours.

New challenges to our civil rights

But today we face unprecedented new challenges to our civil rights. I'm not talking about threats to clearly understood rights like those addressed by the 1964 and 1965 Civil Rights Acts, covering access to public places and voting booths.

No. The new challenges to our civil rights involve the indispensable, but often neglected rights that are boldly enunciated in our Declaration of Independence: "We hold these truths to be self-evident: That all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights; that among these are *life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.*"

These fundamental rights are under assault in subtle, often insidious ways. Sometimes it is with the best of intentions, by good people who don't realize they are impairing other people's rights, hopes and dreams. At other times, however, the assault comes at the hands of people who are willing, even determined, to sacrifice individual life, liberty and pursuit of happiness in the name of a proclaimed threat or greater common good.

The new challenges to our civil rights involve access to energy and economic opportunity. They involve restrictions on our liberties and pursuit of happiness, in the name of protecting the environment.

Energy is the master resource of modern society. It transforms our constitutionally protected rights into civil rights that we actually enjoy: jobs, homes, transportation, healthcare, modern living standards, and other earmarks of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.

With abundant, reliable, affordable energy, much is possible. Without it, hope, opportunity, progress and civil rights are hobbled.

Laws and policies that restrict access to America's abundant energy drive up the price of energy and consumer goods. They cause widespread layoffs, leaving unemployed workers and families struggling to survive, as the cost of everything they eat, drive, wear and do spirals out of control. They roll back the civil rights progress for which civil rights revolutionaries like Dr. Martin Luther King struggled and died.

They create unnecessary obstacles to the natural, justifiable desire of minority Americans to share in the American Dream. They prevent us from resolving conflicts through compromise, and impose needless and unfair burdens on our poorest families.

These laws and policies are obstacles placed in the doorway to opportunity and prosperity. They deny minorities a seat at the energy lunch counter, and send us to the back of the economic bus.

They are the product of unreasonable demands for a pristine environment, and protection from hypothetical future risks, regardless of the heavy, immediate burdens those demands place on others today.

A false Moral High Ground

Ironically, many environmentalist leaders were trained in the tactics and strategies of the civil rights movement. Above all, they understand the power of holding the Moral High Ground.

The civil rights movement's tenacious hold on the Moral High Ground was real, palpable and based on a desire to ensure equality, opportunity and justice for all. With it, we appealed to the moral conscience of the American people.

For years, the environmental movement did likewise ... as it lead campaigns to reduce pollution and protect lands and wildlife. But as it achieved these objectives and increased its power and prestige, it became radicalized. It lost its moral compass. In the words of Greenpeace co-founder Patrick Moore, the movement became anti-science, anti-technology, anti-development – and even anti-people.

Today's radical environmentalists have no claim to a true moral high ground. Their claim is immersed in hubris, cloaked in pseudo science, and lacking concern for the adverse effects their policies often have on families, living standards and civil rights.

All too often environmentalists – and the politicians, bureaucrats and judges who turn green ideologies and policies into mandates – create a false dichotomy between producing energy and protecting the environment.

Few of them bear the burden of the policies they promote and legislate. It is our poor and minority families that bear the brunt of this false dichotomy between energy and the environment.

CORE cares deeply about our environment. But we also care about having jobs ... and affordable food, heat and transportation. We care about impoverished Third World families achieving their dreams. We want laws that bring real environmental benefits, with minimal

hardships – and without driving up the costs of energy, or forcing us to switch to energy that is often illusory, expensive and inadequate for modern societies

We want to know that the environmental values we cherish really are threatened the way environmental activists say they are. That the solutions they advocate really will safeguard those values, without creating enormous new problems. And that new environmental laws will not deprive us of liberty, justice and the right to pursue happiness, opportunity and better living standards.

Today, unfortunately, these common sense requests are under assault by environmentalists, politicians and even journalists who want to eliminate fossil fuels, who base public policies on unfounded ecological scare stories, and who stifle debate by attacking anyone who challenges their assertions.

CORE, for one, will not allow this to continue.

Energy Reality and its consequences

Energy Reality must no longer be denied. Fully *85 percent* of all the energy Americans use comes from fossil fuels. Add in nuclear and hydroelectric power, and we've reached *96 percent*. Biomass is mostly waste from paper mills and sawmills. A mere *four-tenths of one percent* is wind and solar power.

In other words, the alternatives we keep hearing about play only minor roles on the energy stage. They are little more than *supplements* to fossil fuel use. They are illusory.

If we attempt to force a massive switch away from fossil fuels, we will create an enormous Energy Gap – a yawning Grand Canyon between the energy we need, and what we actually have if fossil fuels are outlawed, restricted or priced out of reach. It will have far-reaching economic, health and environmental consequences.

Geologists say America's onshore and offshore public lands contain vast treasure troves of coal, uranium, oil and natural gas:

- Enough oil to run 60 million cars and heat 25 million homes for 60 years;
- Enough natural gas to heat the 60 million homes that use this fuel for 160 years;
- Enough coal, uranium and shale oil for centuries of electrical power.

These energy resources belong to *all* Americans. They are not the private property of vocal activists who insist that they never be touched, or citizens who have been bamboozled into thinking they cannot be developed without destroying priceless ecological values. Policies that keep them off limits are an intolerable and unconstitutional affront to countless Americans whose own rights to these resources are being ignored.

Those Americans are being forced to pay far more for energy that is artificially scarce, because our nation and citizens are not allowed to produce their abundant resources. Their economic progress is held back. They lose the jobs that developing that energy would create. America loses billions of dollars in royalties and taxes. Families and businesses are forced to pay more and more for the energy they need.

We send \$400 billion a year overseas – to countries that often don't like us, but love our money – and love the way locking up our own energy helps keep world oil and gas prices high, and those revenues flowing.

When we lock up our oil and gas, every bit of energy we save through painstaking, expensive conservation and alternative energy efforts is offset by declining US production. We end up importing still more foreign oil – and sending more money and jobs overseas. We end up enslaving ourselves to imported oil. Once again, minority families are disproportionately affected – by policies that are *re*gressive, not progressive.

And still, America's Energy Reality is simply ignored. Instead, environmentalists and politicians say, we should forget about oil, gas and coal – and focus on wind power and ethanol. We need to face facts.

Just to provide electricity to meet New York City's needs would require blanketing the entire state of Connecticut with 300-foot-tall wind turbines. And we would still need expensive *natural gas* power plants – and thus more gas production – to generate electricity every time the wind stops blowing.

We could produce almost *twenty* billion gallons of gasoline annually by drilling safely and carefully in Alaska's Arctic National Wildlife Refuge – from an area one-sixth the size of Hartford, Connecticut. The caribou and polar bears would coexist just fine – the same way they do at nearby Prudhoe Bay oil field.

But politicians have locked this oil up. They say we should produce more ethanol, instead. To grasp how shortsighted these policies are, just consider this.

- The 7 billion gallons of ethanol that the US produced in 2007 came from corn grown on an area the size of Indiana: 23 million acres – 1,800 times more land than all of Hartford.
- It took over 35 billion gallons of water ... billions of dollars in subsidies – and huge amounts of insecticides, fertilizers and petroleum to grow that corn and process it into ethanol.
- This emphasis on corn ethanol has enriched some farmers – but has nearly tripled corn prices and nearly doubled wheat prices. That's bad news for beef, milk, pork and poultry producers – and for consumers, especially poor and minority families.
- The global focus on biofuels has diverted lands from producing food – and resulted in millions of acres of forests and habitat being cut down to grow sugar cane and oil palms for ethanol and bio-diesel.
- According to studies by Princeton University and the Nature Conservancy, the net result of all this biofuels production may be *more* greenhouse gases, not less.
- Worst, the emphasis on corn ethanol is a disaster for Third World countries. The World Food Program says biofuels production is the main reason its operating costs have increased by 40% just since June 2007. The cost of food has gone up so far that the Program now has to ration food aid, and millions more are going to bed hungry and malnourished.
- Meanwhile, the global economic downturn means countries are not increasing their support for the World Food Program, even as they hogtie their economies with still more climate change restrictions.

Simply put, this alternative energy is mostly illusory. It's certainly not sustainable. It is an ecological crisis. And it is an immoral humanitarian and human rights disaster.

What were we thinking when we rammed these policies through Congress and so many state legislatures?

Catastrophic climate change

Unfortunately, our Energy Gap and the assault on civil and human rights look like they are only going to get worse.

Global warming is real, we keep hearing. Yes, it is. Our planet has warmed about a degree over the past hundred years. And it's a good thing, too – or we'd still be living in the Little Ice Age. I don't even doubt that humans probably played a role in some of this warming, with our land use and fossil fuel emissions.

But there is a huge difference between acknowledging these truths – and saying our use of fossil fuels is the *primary* cause of climate change ... future changes will be disastrous ... slashing carbon dioxide emissions will stabilize a climate that has never been stable ... and we can dramatically reduce emissions without adversely affecting energy use, living standards, economic opportunities and civil rights. *Those* claims are simply fallacious.

There's also a huge difference between saying a lot of scientists are worried about catastrophic climate change – and saying there is a consensus. Now I know a lot of good, decent people truly believe this. But I also know many others vigorously disagree.

In fact, I just spent two days with several hundred climate scientists and other experts, and their opinions about the causes and future extent of climate change are all over the map ... as are opinions about what we can or should do about hypothetical climate chaos.

Our Earth's climate is incredibly complex and turbulent. It changes regularly, in response to shifts in solar energy output, cosmic rays, Earth's orbit around the sun, planetary cloud cover, ocean currents, ocean-land-atmosphere interactions, evaporation and precipitation patterns, and all kinds of other inter-related factors that we are only beginning to understand. Even our best computer models are only as good as our understanding of all these factors.

In fact, today's climate models can't forecast trends or events accurately, even one year in advance – much less 50 or 100 years. They certainly cannot be relied upon to decide energy and economic policies that will have enormous impacts on families, businesses and individual liberties *right here and now* – supposedly to prevent disasters that some say could occur 50 or 100 years in the future.

Some of the experts I met with in New York also said average planetary temperatures have been stable or even *cooling off* for the past decade. We don't know whether this trend will continue – any more than we know whether or when the previous warming trend will return.

Simply put, I'm far less concerned about hypothetical future climate disaster than I am about actions we might take today – supposedly to prevent a hypothetical future climate disaster.

We must never forget that it was mostly fossil fuels that made it possible to enjoy the incredible living standards we have today – compared to what people had just a century ago. We must never forget that it is fossil fuels that provide the vast bulk of America's and the world's energy today. We tamper with those energy sources at our peril.

We also mustn't forget that thousands of activists, scientists, bureaucrats, politicians and journalists are trying to link every weather event and unfortunate tragedy to fossil fuel use and Climate Armageddon – and vilifying anyone who questions their assertions. I'm not going to delve into their motives – other than to say that money, power, control, and an

unhealthy sense of their own infallibility are involved. But I certainly question their belief that our world would be better off with fewer fossil fuels, lower living standards, and fewer opportunities for its poorest citizens.

Environmental alarmists have long displayed a distressing disregard for the consequences of their fear-mongering and policies. We have seen it throughout the Third World – opposing DDT to prevent malaria, biotechnology to reduce malnutrition and starvation, and electricity generation to build modern societies and end deadly lung and intestinal diseases. Millions have died. And yet, eco-activists still will not budge, or even apologize.

We are seeing the same ideological attitudes over climate change – with the same disregard for people's needs, civil rights ... and lives.

At the moment, over a dozen climate bills are pending in Congress. Hundreds more are pending in state legislatures, and even at the county and city level. Every one requires major reductions in greenhouse gas emissions – many of them by 80 percent below 1990 levels ... or 90 percent below 2007 levels.

Look around you. Just where are you and your family, company and community going to wipe out 80-plus percent of your emissions – and thus a large portion of your energy use? How are you going to pay for it, or replace it? And what effect will it have on your living standards? your American dream?

Their sponsors insist these proposed laws will somehow stabilize our unstable climate, prevent catastrophe – and transform the United States into an economic powerhouse fueled almost entirely by wind, solar and bio energy. This too is pure fantasy.

In reality, if these bills become law, they will give activists, courts and bureaucrats control over virtually every aspect of our lives. Any activity that produces greenhouse gases would be regulated, restricted, taxed and curtailed – including heating, cooling, transportation and manufacturing ... bakeries, dry cleaners, hotels, office and apartment buildings, cement plants and dairy farms ... and an endless list of other activities.

Our lives, liberties, hopes, dreams and civil rights progress will be impacted in countless ways, and to unprecedented degrees that we cannot even begin to imagine. Whether the blunt instrument is a carbon tax, a carbon offsets tax, a cap-and-trade tax or a carbon sequestration mandate tax – the effect would be the same.

Even a robust, bull-market economy would be hammered. But our economy is already on the ropes. Some say we're in a recession. Every one of these bills would inject high-tax, anti-energy arsenic that would send our economy into a tailspin.

They would compel Americans to stop using fossil fuels – and force them to switch to expensive, unreliable, insufficient sources like wind and solar power, and biofuels.

They would send America into an era of soaring prices and disastrous Energy Gaps, from which many families and businesses will never recover. They would force industry to spend trillions of dollars – and millions of megawatts – to capture, pipeline and store carbon dioxide.

Restricted supplies and sharply higher energy costs would force companies to lay off workers, shift operations and jobs overseas – or simply close their doors.

Family incomes would plummet. Tax revenues would dwindle. Government social programs would wither, including low income energy assistance.

The impacts on families in impoverished Third World countries would be even more devastating.

All across India, Africa and other poor countries, millions of mothers and daughters now spend hours every day collecting firewood – or squatting in animal feces and urine, to collect, dry and store manure for cooking and heating fires. They spend more hours carrying water from distant rivers and lakes, often miles away, and often tainted with parasites and bacteria. They devote still more hours over primitive hearths, constantly breathing polluted smoke from their fires.

The impacts on human health are horrendous. Four million infants, children and mothers *die* every year from lung infections – caused by breathing the smoke, soot, bacteria and pollutants that are a constant fixture in their homes and villages.

Two million more perish every year from dysentery and other intestinal diseases, caused by unsafe water and spoiled food – due to a lack of refrigeration and water treatment.

Why? Because they have no electricity. In fact, Al Gore uses more electricity in a week than 100 million Africans put together use in a year. In fact, 95 percent of Sub-Saharan Africans never have electricity ... or get it only a few hours every couple of weeks.

And yet, environmental activists are telling these destitute people that climate change is the most serious threat they face. That is nonsense. It is not climate change that threatens them. It is neo-colonialist, eco-imperialist laws and restrictions that are being imposed on them, in the name of preventing climate change.

Remain indigenous, they are told. Don't sacrifice your traditional ways. Emphasize sustainable development.

Don't use fossil fuels; they cause global warming. Don't build nuclear plants; they're dangerous. Don't build hydroelectric power plants; they dam up rivers. Be content with limited wind and solar power, instead.

Accept green labels on food exports, they are told – and the reduced trade and family incomes that those labels cause, as consumers shun your flowers and produce, because they are shipped on airplanes that emit greenhouse gases.

Learn to live with reduced food and economic aid – because weakened First World economies can no longer afford it, and their focus on biofuels is driving up grain prices. But don't use biotechnology to grow more crops with less water and fewer pesticides, because we think biotech crops are unsafe.

Don't use insecticides, especially DDT, to help control and eradicate malaria – because we are more worried about the speculative effects of those chemicals, than about the lethal diseases they would prevent.

These policies are immoral and inhumane. Kenya's Akinyi Arunga is right: "Cute, indigenous customs aren't so charming when they make up one's day-to-day existence. Then they mean indigenous poverty, indigenous malnutrition, indigenous disease and childhood death. I don't wish this on my worst enemy, and I wish our so-called friends would stop imposing it on us."

UCLA economics professor Deepak Lal makes an equally valid point. Having increased global carbon dioxide levels to fuel its own industrialization, he notes, the West is now saying the Third World should not do the same, because that could lead to global warming.

“At the same time, to keep their SUVs on the road, Western citizens want to use a larger proportion of the world's limited land to produce ethanol, rather than food for the world's hungry masses.”

George Tagarook, former mayor of the Inupiat village of Kaktovik, Alaska expressed his own anger eloquently when he said the phrase “making the ANWR issue go away forever” is just “code” for designating the coastal plain of ANWR as wilderness and “finally removing us from our homelands. It is code for genocide. And it [has] nothing to do with caribou, nothing to do with oil, and surely nothing to do with preserving real native cultures. [It is] about using one tribe against another to remove the victim tribe from its homelands, so their homelands might be safe for the imperialists to use as they like.”

Where is the environmental justice in these policies? Where is the Moral High Ground?

China, India, Brazil and Indonesia know they cannot curtail their economic development, or their use of fossil fuels to power their industrialization. Neither can Uganda or South Africa. If they did so, they would face riots, revolutions, and open warfare over artificially scarce food, jobs and opportunities.

That means their emissions will continue to increase. It means the Kyoto Protocol and various other “climate stabilization” initiatives will bring few benefits – even assuming carbon dioxide really is the primary cause of climate change. In exchange for all the economic deprivation and human misery they would bring, those initiatives would reduce computer-model-predicted average global temperatures by only a few tenths of one degree by 2050. State or local initiatives would bring even fewer benefits, for all the pain they would inflict.

There is a better way.

For forty years, I have led the Congress of Racial Equality in fighting for social, political and economic civil rights for all Americans. Because of this great moral struggle, we have all worked and prospered together, in an America that is a much better place, with greatly improved opportunities and living standards for all.

Now we must work together, to ensure that our energy and economic civil rights are protected – and our civil rights progress since the 1960s is not rolled back. We must stand firm against the terrible toll that anti-energy policies take on civil and human rights. We must bring health and prosperity to all people.

Right here in Wisconsin, it is excellent news that there is a burgeoning movement to embrace nuclear energy – far and away the nation's largest electricity source that does not emit greenhouse gases. Legislation approved in the state House in early March would repeal the state's longstanding moratorium on the construction of new nuclear power plants. These engines of clean, reliable electricity supply are sorely needed to meet future energy needs. Enactment of this legislation should be a top priority for state lawmakers.

We must ensure that we do not usher in a new era of energy Jim Crow laws. That we do not let Energy Killers send poor and minority Americans to the back of the economic bus – or keep the world's most impoverished people starved for energy and wallowing in poverty, misery, disease, malnutrition and premature death.

We must insist that our environment be protected ... from threats that are real – not from dangers that are the product of exaggeration, headlines, Hollywood special effects or unreliable computer models.

If we are to make major sacrifices – to give up our energy, liberties and economic opportunities – we must first be given real, replicable, scientific evidence that we face a real planetary crisis, and that the proposed laws and draconian measures will prevent the crisis. That evidence does not yet exist.

So we must keep studying climate change and other environmental issues. But we must ensure that our focus on these issues does not reduce our ability to address other equally important issues – including energy deprivation, poverty, malaria, malnutrition, tuberculosis and AIDS.

We must ensure that every purported problem and proposed solution is discussed and debated, openly and vigorously – and that questions and dissent are not stifled and stigmatized. Those who challenge climate catastrophe claims are as decent and honest as the vast majority of experts who believe we face a planetary emergency. We must no longer tolerate the disgusting personal attacks on climate chaos skeptics that are the rhetorical equivalent to the fire hoses and German shepherds that were used against an earlier generation of civil rights marchers.

I call on every one gathered here today ... and every thoughtful, caring citizen in our great nation ... to join with me in challenging the modern-day Bull Connors and George Wallaces, who are standing in the door, trying to prevent poor people the world over from achieving Martin Luther King's dream of equal opportunity and true environmental justice.

We must tenaciously hold on to the Moral High Ground, as we appeal to the moral conscience of the American people. They are good people; they want to do the right thing.

Together, we can make it happen.

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Defending civil rights – and making equality a reality

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