



Energize America, DailyKos and Congress - and now The Oil Drum

Posted by [Jerome a Paris](#) on March 14, 2007 - 9:00pm

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A number of you here on the Oil Drum are certainly familiar with **Energize America**, the plan outlining a sane energy policy that was drafted on DailyKos by concerned bloggers over a number of months last year. For those of you that are not familiar with that process that brought that plan to existence, I am summarizing it below.

The interesting thing is that, after having gotten a few endorsements from candidates during last year's election campaign, we have now caught the attention of senior people in Congress, who have explicitly asked us to send them draft legislation. No names have been provided, but they are well positioned to act on these proposals, and if we manage to deliver what they're looking for, the credibility of **Energize America**, and that of DailyKos, and all associated bloggers, will get a huge boost.

An important note at this point: while DailyKos is a website of the left in the US, and the contacts with politicians have focused so far on Democrats, **Energize America** has explicitly been designed from the start as a non-partisan plan, meant to be palatable to all (minus a few lobbies, obviously), and not as a Democratic plan. It relies heavily on market mechanisms and private initiative, while focusing on long term goals like lower energy demand and carbon emission reduction, and should be an acceptable basis for discussion for all that care about energy policy. As a community focused on energy issues, I think that the Oil Drum is an ideal place to participate to that movement, and to bring ideas, solutions and reality-based vetting of proposals, and I'd like to invite you to join that effort. A simple solution would be to invite you over to the relevant DailyKos threads, but it would be even better if the wide range of competences on this site were directly brought into action.

So I'm hoping that you'll be interested to support that process. That can come simply in the form of contributing content and reactions to the diaries that discuss proposals (everything is done openly, transparently). The most active and/or knowledgeable contributors are usually invited quite quickly to participate in the data absorption/draft editing work that takes place offline between diaries in order to bring updated content.

At this stage, I'd like to use this thread to test the appetite of the TOD community to work on **Energize America**; if there is strong interest, the idea will be to crosspost discussion diaries over here on a regular basis to get the specific TOD input in addition to the DailyKos input. So tell

[Energize America diaries](#)
[Energize America website](#)

A little bit of history

I started writing about energy on DailyKos in late 2004. This is the topic I know (I finance the sector, lately focusing on financing wind farms), and, like many of us, I just wanted to share information and insights on a topic I knew. As I wrote quite regularly, my diaries became a sort of "hanging out" place for energy-minded kossacks, and lots of ideas were proposed and discussed (often irrespective of the original content of my diary).

With all the input provided all year long by kossacks, and with the attention of the community focused on the topic after Katrina struck, it made sense to try to propose something to actually use all these proposals. Thus the first draft of the plan was born, [posted on the site](#) and critiqued, complimented, complemented, criticised, "get real'ed", and supported.

A new version was [posted shortly afterwards](#) which generated more attention and more activity. Soon, several iterations of the process were run with the active support of **Meteor Blades** ([Draft 2](#)) and **devilstower** ([Draft 3](#)) and many others. Eventually [the fifth draft](#) was presented at **YearlyKos** in Las Vegas in June in the presence, and with the warm encouragements, of **Bill Richardson**, Bill Clinton's former Energy Secretary.

The full presentation, with comments and explanations, can be viewed through the following diaries:

- [YK - Energize America presentation \(part 1 - the energy situation\)](#)
- [YK - Energize America presentation \(part 2 - how Kossacks built EA\)](#)
- [YK - Energize America presentation \(part 3 - main goals\)](#)
- [YK - Energize America presentation \(part 4 - principles and exemplary Acts\)](#)
- [YK - Energize America presentation \(part 5 - how you can help\)](#)

Gaining political support

Beyond the warm words of Governor Richardson, we saw a steady drip of candidates and other politicians giving their support to the plan (as per the links below - there were others that did not take such a public form, like Ted Ankrum (TX-10) or Jerry McNerney (CA-11)). A number of kossacks also sent the plan to their representatives or to people they knew within their representatives' or senator's offices.

[How Can Energize America Activate America?](#) by **State Rep Mark Cohen Dem PA**
[Energize America endorsed by Congressional Candidate in FL-01!](#) by **Friends of Joe Roberts**
[John Boehner \(OH-08\) Must Resign, Mort Meier for Congress, by Mort Meier](#) by **mortmeier**
[LiveBlogging: Nancy Skinner \(MI-9\) endorses Energize America](#) by **Jerome a Paris**

While no new version of the plan was prepared, a growing awareness of the plan was perceivable, and various contacts were made with politicians or their staff. A big breakthrough came a few weeks ago, when members of the EA team met with [a senior member of Congress](#) and were specifically asked to provide draft wording for bills on 10 of the 20 acts proposed by **Energize America**.

While the name of the Congressperson cannot be disclosed yet, it is someone senior, and able to push bills, and thus this current process means that bloggers can have a direct influence on texts

Again, while that process has focused on Democratic candidates because of where it started, the plan in itself is not targeted particularly at a Democratic audience. It focuses on the long term energy outlook for the USA and tries to propose pragmatic ways thing can be realistically improved today. It should not be impossible to get bipartisan support for the majority of its proposals. Bringing it here to the Oil Drum would be, in my mind, a great way to ensure that "objective" considerations predominate over political ones, beyond the tactical need for the acts to actually get voted into law at some point.

The current activity

The opportunity with that Congressperson was not to be wasted, and work has been under way in the past month. Not many of the diaries have been extremely visible, but most of the work has been done publicly, on the site, via diaries making proposals and requesting input from the community. Just like for the initial plan, an iterative process run by a small team and supported by all participating kossacks has been able to do wonders, and we've already come up with firm proposals on 4 acts:

Neighborhood Power Act

[ENERGIZE AMERICA: The Neighborhood Power Act](#) by **A Siegel**

[ENERGIZE AMERICA: Neighborhood Power Act -- Draft 2](#) by **A Siegel**

[ENERGIZE AMERICA: Neighborhood Power Act, round 3: Final Review, Two questions](#) by **A Siegel**

[ENERGIZE AMERICA: Draft LEGISLATION Neighborhood Power Act -- Q&A](#) by **A Siegel**

[ENERGIZE AMERICA: Neighborhood Power Act, backgrounder material](#) by **A Siegel**

Home Efficiency Act

[ENERGIZE AMERICA: Home Efficiency Act](#) by **MarketTrustee**

[ENERGIZE AMERICA: Home Efficiency Deadline Edition](#) by **MarketTrustee**

Community Emergency Power Act

[ENERGIZE AMERICA: Community Continuity of Power Act \(CCPA\) -- First Draft](#) by **A Siegel**

[ENERGIZE AMERICA: Continuity of Community Services Act](#) by **A Siegel**

Renewable Fertilizer Act

[Putting More "Renewable" in Renewable Fuels](#) by **deb9**

[EA2020: Replacing Natural Gas with Wind Power](#) by **Rick Winrod**

Feed the Grid

[ENERGIZE AMERICA: Planning the Smart/Net Metering Act](#) by **chapter1**

[ENERGIZE AMERICA: Net Metering and Risk Mitigation](#) by **chapter1**

[ENERGIZE AMERICA: Selling Power in Sodom](#) by **chapter1**

[ENERGIZE AMERICA: Join the Grid Act Draft](#) by **chapter1**

[ENERGIZE AMERICA: draft 2 of Net Metering Bill](#) by **chapter1**

[ENERGIZE AMERICA: Fair Grid Connection Act vs. HR 729](#) by **mataliandy**

Some of these are directly drawn from the initial Energize America ideas; some are new or largely revamped proposals - but that's the beauty of the concept: we are flexible, we are not answerable to any lobby with pre-determined priorities, and we're happy to change tack if someone comes up with a good suggestion - and does some of the legwork.

As you can see from the authors of the diaries, many different people are contributing - and if you

take a look at the threads, you'll see that many more participate or simply support the process. That's all we need - some content providers, supported by a lot of friendly onlookers and readers, who occasionally jump in to approve or criticize a concept or a turn of phrase. Feel free to give your input, if only on the political angle of any proposal, or if you know anyone that would like to contribute.

The technology of community

This is an expression coined by Bill McKibben, in an article in [Sierra Magazine](#) last January about Energize America:

In fact, it's pretty clear that what we need most at this point is not just some new technology, but also--maybe even more--a planning system that takes full advantage of the ideas already on the table. The policy debate in Washington has grown so stylized and stalemated--it's a kind of Kabuki dance, in which one side says, "CAFE standards" and the other shouts, "ANWR!" and all recoil in horror--that nothing new ever happens, at least not on a scale that might make a difference. It's considered a deep breakthrough when President Bush announces in his State of the Union speech that we're "addicted to oil," even if his solution is to find us some new dealers. In the absence of real leadership from the top (Jimmy Carter was the last guy who tried, and politicians have not forgotten what happened to him), **the best chance may be some leadership from the bottom.**

Right now, we are in the process of inventing a new way not only to participate to political debate (as is finally acknowledged widely), but also to do other things, *including drafting policy*. We're doing this in a non-hierarchical way, without the influence of lobbies, completely transparently and on the basis of people giving their time and insights voluntarily and for free. It's up to us to push this as far as we can, it could potentially revolutionize politics.

Here are a few more diaries on the process:

[DailyKos in Action: the example of 'Energize America'](#) by **Jerome a Paris**

[DailyKos as a tool to draft policy](#) by **Jerome a Paris**

[The technology of community](#) by **Jerome a Paris**

[Why](#) by **Jerome a Paris**

[ENERGIZE AMERICA -- A Brief Update ...](#) by **A Siegel**

[First Energize America draft Act brought to Congress](#) by **Jerome a Paris**

Please help us - getting these acts to Congress - and through Congress - would be an incredible achievement for all bloggers.



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