

## READER'S VIEW ENERGY

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# Let's abandon our reliance on fossil fuels

BY JOHN GARDNER

It's time to do the right thing.

The current debate over expanding oil exploration in the United States is just one more example of tackling a serious problem by arguing over the wrong issue.

I am opposed to the expansion of drilling leases, not because of environmental concerns, but because it allows people to think there might be an easy fix. I am reminded of something Winston Churchill once said of us: "You can always count on Americans to do the right thing — after they've tried everything else."

I, for one, desperately hope we've exhausted everything else and are prepared to do the right thing: move forward on a comprehensive energy policy, not based on consumption, but on valuing all of our energy re-



sources and discouraging dependence on fossil fuels. After decades of pandering and evasion by our leaders, we can't afford to wait any longer. And it appears I'm not alone. More and more national figures are calling for leadership on this issue.

Expanding our supplies, either through seeking the largess of other nations or increasing opportunities in our own territory, is dangerous because it gives us, and our leaders, an excuse to avoid the inevitable. Fossil fuels will run out. Perhaps we are already seeing the beginning of the end of the oil age. In addition, burning fossil fuels creates greenhouse gases. Congress will soon pass legislation that will make it more expensive to burn fossil fuels. Both factors (limited supply and congressional action) will cause prices to continue to rise. Instead of focusing on increasing supplies, we should, instead, decrease demand.

The fixes for our situation

don't lie in the frozen tundra, under the blue waters off our shores or in the sands of the Middle East. While we wait for our leaders to catch up, we can move ahead and make a difference by our personal choices and decrease demand for fossil fuels. I believe we start by examining the daily commute, arguably the least useful application of the single-occupant vehicle. Start small; build up.

- Find the bus route nearest your home and take the bus one day. Your employer might even pick up the tab (mine does).

- Identify a safe bike route between work and home. Try it one day (trust me, it feels great).

- Find co-workers who live in your neighborhood and share a ride. ACHD Commuteride can help you find a car pool ([commuteride.com](http://commuteride.com)).

- If you are an elected official or a city planner, wake up and realize that our cities, and particularly our suburbs, can't

continue to grow as they have in the past. Smaller homes, denser development and high-performance buildings will be the norm, and smart consumers will demand them.

► Finally, if you are an elected official, whether representing a district in the Statehouse or the entire country in the White House, please lead. I believe that Americans want to be part of the solution. No more concession. Please don't make the same mistakes that were made in the wake of the attacks in 2001. Don't pat us on the head and tell us to go shopping.

In the words of President Kennedy when he committed our nation to put a man on the moon, we want to "do these things, not because they are easy, but because they are hard."

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