

Energy and Energy Policy

by **Steve Berry** on September 29th, 2008, 1:37 pm

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The Editor
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Dear Editor:

As a Denver native and one who spends a large portion of his life in Colorado, I find it puzzling that Colorado has such conflicting groups concerning the presidential candidates. I say this as a scientist who has spent much of my research life studying energy, including energy efficiency, and environment. I've taught courses for years on energy and environmental management jointly with colleagues from Economics and from Law. And I've worked with legislative and advisory bodies as well. Hence I can claim credentials that go somewhat beyond the stereotyped boundaries of academia.

There are some strange things in the positions taken by Senator McCain concerning these and related areas. I pick these up specifically from the answers he gave to the "14 Questions" posed by ScienceDebate2008.com, which both he and Senator Obama addressed very recently. Senator McCain himself declares that global warming is a serious problem that requires us to reduce emissions of carbon dioxide. Yet he chose a candidate for Vice President who does not believe that emissions of carbon dioxide by human activity are a problem at all. If Senator McCain were elected to be our next president, and if, as is possible given his health history, he were unable to continue in office, we could expect a new policy that would increase our use of fossil fuels and hence increase the American contribution to global climate change. Senator Obama, on the other hand, would bring this country into a global leadership role in combating climate change, with specific targets for reducing emissions, as part of a program to develop new ways to generate and use energy efficiently. Both candidates support wind power, but only Senator Obama recognizes that there is a serious problem of transmitting that electric power from the wind farms on the plains and prairies to where that energy is needed. Only Senator Obama has specific targets for achieving new levels of energy efficiency, and has provided pathways to reach those targets.

It is amusing that Senator McCain says, in several of his answers to the 14 Questions, that modern methods of communication, specifically computers, are terribly important and that we must have a population skilled with computers and their use. He, however, makes a joke of the fact that he doesn't know how to use a computer for e-mail. What kind of example is he setting? "Do as I say, not as I do."

I will mention only one more issue because of its special importance for Colorado. That is the problem of water, something I've studied for a long time. Senator Obama has a specific set of actions to improve the efficient use of water, ranging from stimulating "water smart" landscapes to providing information, training and economic assistance to achieve significant improvements in water efficiency. Senator McCain, despite his origins, sees only that water rights must be respected and that disputes should be achieved by consensus. He simply doesn't address the issue of scarcity. I cannot see how the policies Senator McCain has chosen could do anything but harm my native state, and if anything were to happen to him, I believe it could well be a catastrophe for Colorado.

Most sincerely,
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