

***Coachella Valley Desert Lyceum Summit on Energy, Environment and
Economic Change***

“Educating Our Community: Building for a Green Future”

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➤ **Why Go “Green”?**

Why do we believe that the future is necessarily green? Isn't “green” just the flavor of the moment? A marketing pitch to sell products ranging from carpets to cars? A nice-to-do for the do-gooders on this planet?

The answer to this question (and the obvious set-up for today's discussion) is a resounding “NO”!

“Green” – or sustainable policies, practices, and products – is justified from both a private interest perspective as well as a public interest perspective. In this section of my discussion, I will argue the case that sustainable policies, practices, and products are the foundation for a future we can – and must – collectively create. Being an energy utility representative, I will focus my discussion on the energy sector.

Private Interest – For consumers, the adoption of sustainable practices and products is little more than economic common sense.

The core value of conservation is the elimination of wasteful usage ... and, if you pay an energy bill, wasted energy is wasted money. Similarly, energy efficiency increases the productivity of energy used to eliminate waste ... This provides the consumer with better value and lower bills than he or she otherwise would have had to pay.

But the economic benefits created do not rest only with those who practice conservation or participate in energy efficiency programs. The system-wide impact of conservation and energy efficiency is to reduce the amount of energy the serving utility (such as Southern California Edison) has to generate or procure for its customers. Since we can partner with our customers to help them save energy at less cost than it would take to produce or procure additional power (especially at “peak” periods when energy demand is high and supply is less abundant), large-scale conservation and energy efficiency impacts reduce the cost we must pay to serve our customer base ... At SCE, this cost reduction is passed along to the utility's customers.

Public Interest – Beyond the direct economic benefits enjoyed by conservation/energy efficiency participants and non-participants alike, there are also public benefits that are produced.

From a local and state government perspective, successful energy efficiency programs are a cost-effective investment in local economic development. Money saved on residential and business energy bills is investment potential freed up to be applied to the local economy.

Beyond simple economics, a robust portfolio of conservation, energy efficiency, and demand response options serves to diversify energy resources, which (in a properly balanced portfolio) increases energy reliability and security.

[Note: Tom Friedman, the Pulitzer Prize winning author and foreign affairs columnist for the New York Times, makes a compelling case that “greener” energy supply also reduces reliance upon imported foreign energy sources, which in turn improves our national security.]

From a global environmental perspective, there can be no argument that conservation and energy efficiency practices and products are our quickest, cheapest and most certain way to reduce greenhouse gas emissions within the energy sector. Even those who you are not yet convinced that human activity is a substantial cause of global warming cannot deny that California legislative and regulatory requirements make it essential that we work together to maximize the cost-effective GHG reduction benefits offered by demand-side resources. For those who do recognize the urgency and imperative of addressing global warming, conservation and energy efficiency offers an avenue for both personal and collective action.

[Note: In California, the energy sector accounts for about 20% of GHG emissions – 10% from within California and 10% from power imported into California. The largest GHG emissions sector in California? Transportation, at about 40%.]

➞ **What Can We Do? What Should We Do?**

The job before us is awe-inspiring in scope and importance: We must seek to fundamentally transform the energy usage of people, buildings, and things. It will take a symphony of orchestrated actions – some voluntary and others mandatory – to effect change on the scale needed. Government and energy utilities must partner with each other, as well as with the citizens and customers they serve, to accomplish this.

People -- To the extent that energy usage is the product of choice, we must educate people through the cycle of:

1. *Awareness* – Consumers become aware of their energy usage and recognize its consequences.
2. *Attitude* – Desire change.
3. *Intent* – Commitment to change.
4. *Action* – Take the first step ... Take an energy survey or buy and install a CFL.
5. *Long-Term Change* – Energy efficiency becomes the norm or “business as usual”. [Note: This is the stated objective of the California Energy Efficiency Strategic Plan being developed by the California investor-owned utilities.]

Buildings – In terms of how they use energy, we should strive to make buildings smarter than the people who inhabit them. The goal should be to reshape the energy-using infrastructure of our country, building by building. The investor-owned utilities are trying to set the stage so that it is possible for all residential new construction to be zero net energy by 2020 and for all commercial new construction to be zero net energy by 2030.

Things – Energy-using appliances and hardware must be built to sip – not guzzle – resources and energy. The era of voluntary programs (such as the U.S. EPA/DOE ENERGY STAR program) is here today and here to stay. But that’s not enough ... It’s time for consumers to foment the non-violent overthrow of bad engineering!¹ The era of smart meters that “talk” to their utility, to their home-owners, and to the appliances in the house is just around the corner.

In sum, the future looks bright ... and green!

¹ All credit goes to Amory Lovins of the Rocky Mountain Institute for this battle cry.