



## Changing the Energy/Environment Discussion

by Marita Noon

In reaching to remain relevant, the environmental movement has had to change tactics.

Back in the seventies, when America looked like China does today, environmental issues needed attention. But then we cleaned up the air and water. The skies and rivers went from brown to blue. As Greenpeace cofounder Patrick Moore explains, in order to stay relevant, environmentalists had to find new issues.

For most of the last decade, global warming has been *their* cause, and carbon — or burning fossil fuels — was vilified as *the* cause. This gave way to a whole new industry: green. Green energy would replace fossil fuels. Wind and solar would replace coal as the source fuel for electricity and ethanol, or other fuels generated from biomass, would replace liquid fuels. Green energy would provide new “green” jobs. The world would be a beautiful place.

This all sounded nice. It felt good.

But that was before data began to show how much more all of this was going to cost and the urgent need to save the planet passed. The polar bears were not drowning. The measurements were found to be falsified. Consensus science didn’t work. The seas did not rise and the world seemed to adapt to whatever the various changes have been. There was a “newfound hostility to climate policy.” Suddenly, we did not want to spend so much on “feel good.”

Obama’s cap and trade campaign promise died. Ethanol is on the budget chopping block. Switching to wind and solar is not proving to be as easy as expected. Environmentalists admitted defeat.

But, wait! They had organizations set up, offices with leases, and employees who needed to be paid. They couldn’t just pack up. A new approach was needed.

Enter public health.

Recently when Mayor Bloomberg gave \$50 million to the Sierra Club’s campaign to shut down coal plants, he stated: “Coal is a self-inflicted public health risk.” The discussion has *changed* to something every mother can get behind.

Along with this, we see television ads attacking the emissions from coal-fueled power plants, not for their CO<sup>2</sup> emissions, not for their impact on climate change, but for the health risks. The American Lung Association and the EPA must be in cahoots on this campaign — the EPA has given the ALA nearly 30 million in taxpayer dollars.

According to the National Institute for Health’s Data Fact Sheet on Asthma Statistics, “The prevalence of asthma has been increasing since the early 1980s.” If the prevalence of asthma has been increasing

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as America's air has been getting cleaner and cleaner, perhaps adding new and expensive regulations on behalf of public health isn't really about public health. In fact, a recent study done by Kendle M. Maslowski and Charles R. Mackay published in *Nature Immunology* indicates that we may have cleaned up the air so much that the body doesn't have the chance to build up immunities.

While only a small percentage of the population suffer from asthma, and the science is questionable as to whether or not pushing the law of diminishing returns will help, the Obama administration talks about rolling back regulations while pushing the EPA to enact harsh new regulations that will eliminate the best economic asset America has: comparatively cheap energy.

Specifically in question here is the EPA's new ozone regulations. But there is more than just ozone, there is the Cross-State Air Pollution Rule, BART, and MACT — all of which are expected to shut down a large percentage of existing coal-fueled power plants because the cost to retrofit is just too high. Many units have already shut down throughout the country.

With these "public-health"-aimed regulations added on top of one another, it is amazing that Americans are living longer and longer. If all of these regulations are really about health, why are they being rammed through by the Environmental Protection Agency — not the Department of Health?

As Congress continues to threaten to defund the EPA, perhaps, like the environmentalists, they have had to reinvent themselves to stay relevant — but in doing so, they are raising the price of energy and everything else, including food and clothing and all other basic necessities as they, too, are energy dependent.

If they can so easily switch from climate change to public health, you have to wonder if climate change was ever the issue and if public health is the real concern now. Why is it that the powers that be are so set on raising the cost of energy — through whatever means seems publicly viable?

The obvious answer is something not palatable to most Americans. Which brings up the next question: What can we do to stop them?

At a recent a meeting with Karl Rove, I asked: "Given the current administration, what can the public do to change the energy policy in America?"

In short, his answer was to keep reminding people how important energy is. November 2012 is coming.

If Americans are to continue to have the freedoms we have, energy has to be a part of the discussion and Americans need to understand the real benefits to cost-effective energy. Together we can change the energy/environment discussion.

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*Public Interest Institute's POLICY STUDY, "Environmental Utopia: What Would Life be Like If the Environmentalists Were in Charge?" by Marita Noon, can be viewed at <http://www.LimitedGovernment.org/publications/pubs/studies/ps-11-6.pdf>.*

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