

Fix It: Episode III - The episodic thing makes me feel like I am writing the next Harry Potter or something. OK, enough fantasizing. On to the real stuff.

Energy: The "fix" for our energy problems is actually one of the simpler ones. And, the reason it is simple is not because of any action of Congress or the President. It is not even because of our founding fathers. It comes from God.

This country is blessed with enormous natural resources. We have more coal than any other country on earth. We can make electricity from coal. We also have enough natural gas, by some estimates, to last us for a century. We make electricity from natural gas. We have a number of nuclear plants that generate electricity and we can build more. And, we have rivers to create hydroelectric power which can be harnessed to create more power should we need it. I have just described four sources that currently create more than 90% of all the electricity in this country. And, we can expand them all if we want or need to without importing anything from any other country.

But, you say, you haven't mentioned anything about our primary transportation fuel: oil. Currently, we import about half of all the oil used in the United States. But, we don't have to.

Last year, the [National Petroleum Council](#) (NPC) released a [study](#) showing that there are now enough proven oil reserves in the U.S., Canada and Mexico to meet all the projected oil use in those 3 countries for the next 30 years, at least. That means we can use all the oil we need without importing a drop from Saudi Arabia, Russia or anyplace else outside of North America. Now, some of you will assume that NPC is some front organization for evil oil companies. Sorry. It was formed by the U.S. Department of Energy to keep the Energy Secretary informed about petroleum reserves in the country and its membership includes several environmental groups. And, NPC is not the only organization reaching this conclusion.

Back in the 1920s, as more and more cars were being built, President Calvin Coolidge wrestled with the predictions that the world would run out of oil in 1935. But, technological improvements found more and more oil. My father was a petroleum geologist working in Kern County, California in those days, and he used the latest innovations of the time to find that oil. This same scenario is playing out again. New technologies have developed new ways to economically extract oil that previously either could not be found or could not be extracted. We have new

proven reserves in the Dakotas, in Pennsylvania, West Virginia and many other states, including even California and New York. We have the ability as a country to be completely energy independent. This is a tremendous national asset. The Germans can't do this. The Japanese can't. Even the Chinese can't. We are the only country on earth that has energy resources that we are *choosing* not to use, opting to import that energy instead. Why?

Unfortunately, various groups with political influence use "environmental" reasons to block U.S. energy development. But, the "environmental" arguments are just a smoke screen for people who are against any growth in human activity at all. I can refute every supposed environmental argument to the development of our own U.S. energy resources, but it would take the next 4 episodes of this epistle to do so. Suffice it to say, for example, that developing all the available oil in Alaska would impact only the land equivalent to a postage stamp on a football field. Slant drilling will enable the extraction of much of our offshore oil without ever penetrating the ocean floor. And even if this were not the case, is it better to buy the oil from foreign countries whose environmental regulations contain none of the protections that ours do?

But, let's assume that I am wrong and that there are environmental impacts. Those must be weighed against the benefits of developing our own oil. Let's assess what those benefits are: **(1**

) Jobs

- The states with the lowest unemployment in the country today are generally the energy producing states like Oklahoma and Texas. We can have a lot more of those. And, the jobs produced are good paying jobs and often union jobs.

(2) Trade Deficit

- We can vastly reduce the trade deficit if we don't have to import so much oil.

(3) Security

- Some of you probably believe that we entered the Persian Gulf War to protect Kuwait as a source of oil. If we didn't have to import oil from there, (or other non-North American countries), our foreign policy towards such countries could be completely different. And, I think it is unlikely we will be attacking Canada any time soon.

(4) Price

- There is a world price of oil. But, we can have a great deal more control over what we pay at the pump if we are domestically sourcing our own oil. So, what are we giving up in exchange for the weak environmental arguments? Jobs, lower deficits, security and lower prices against.....no real argument at all.

So, you ask, where is the bipartisanship here? When we have voted to complete the Keystone pipeline, nearly one third of Democrats in the House joined every Republican in support, in spite of heavy, heavy pressure from the White House on Democrats to oppose. Without that pressure, an overwhelming majority of both the House and the Senate will support an initiative to develop all of our domestic energy. Unfortunately, President Obama has become a captive of

a small, fringe element of his support base that opposes all growth. That is not where most Democrats are. That is not where most people are. No other country on earth has the ability to be energy independent and chooses to import it instead.

You may also ask why I have not talked about the oft-discussed wind and solar options. I have nothing against wind and solar. But, they can never be anything but supplemental for any number of reasons because the wind does not always blow and the sun does not always shine. Solar might be more effective in the future if there is a breakthrough technology. But, the interests promoting wind and solar are doing so precisely because they know that reliance on these sources will make energy scarce and expensive. In the end, that is what they want because it will stifle growth. I think about this when I drive past the windmill farms near Palm Springs. How can that huge blight on an otherwise beautiful desert landscape that produces so little energy can be considered environmentally sound? With much less environmental impact, for less money and without potentially killing birds, we can produce so much more energy in so many other ways. I think wind is one of our least environmentally-friendly energy sources.

As far as I am concerned, this discussion is not about using more oil or burning more gas. The car I drive most of the time in California is an electric car (more about that and electric cars in general in a future laptop). We have a number of energy choices to power our future and we should let technology and the market decide which energy source is best. But whatever that source is, we can make it here. We don't have to import it from outside our continent or be dependent on some unstable or unfriendly government to get it. And, we can add a lot of jobs, economic growth and, yes, tax revenue along the way. This is truly a no-brainer element of fixing the American economy.

Random Thought of the Day: Last week, we voted on several alternative budgets to the Paul Ryan budget, which was the budget we ultimately passed. One of them was President Obama's budget. The President's budget failed by a vote of 0 - 414. You read that correctly. Not one member of the House of Representatives, Republican or Democrat, could bring themselves to vote for the Obama budget. Is that some indication of just how bad the Obama budget is? Just as this vote was finished up on the House floor, I heard another congressman quip, "Well, Obama said he was going to bring us all together and unite us. And, he has finally done that!"

Until Episode IV, have a Happy Easter and Blessed Passover.