

This is no time to back off clean energy | The Tennessean

For Tennesseans, the current debate on continuing the state solar incentives involves deeper questions than just tax policy. Should we reduce our dependence on fossil fuels? Should the government continue supporting the nascent clean-energy industry, as it has done for decades with the traditional energy industries? Do we really even need clean energy in our country?

As a military professional with 36 years experience, my answer to all these questions is a resounding **yes!**

America's national security and economic vitality are threatened by our dependence on fossil fuels. For the military, moving away from traditional energy sources is not about being "green," it is about preventing any operational impact due to cost and availability of fossil fuels and the strategic need to secure fuel sources in unstable regions where our economy sends \$1 billion a day to pay for oil.

The Navy and Air Force have committed to obtaining 50 percent of their energy from alternative sources. They already have planes and ships that run on fuels made from plants and algae and military bases with solar and wind power.

The Army is working toward a strategy under which bases will produce all the energy and water they consume as well as replacing gas vehicles with electric ones. Marines at forward operating bases are using portable solar panels to charge communication equipment, high-efficiency LED lighting systems for illumination and equipment that increases troop efficiency while reducing the need for vulnerable fuel convoys.

This same practical approach is already working in our state. Tennessee is among the nation's leaders in creating jobs and developing home-grown clean-energy solutions. A recent Middle Tennessee State University report found that clean-energy jobs are the fastest-growing part of our state's economy. Last year, there were 76,031 clean-energy jobs with more than 6,000 in the solar industry.

Our largest businesses are already moving to cleaner energy. Last week in a National Public Radio interview, Fred Smith of FedEx laid out his plans to use biofuel in his airplanes, natural gas in his 18-wheelers, and replace his gas-powered delivery vehicles with electric-powered vans.

This region has the resources to develop the robust clean energy needed to create jobs while improving our nation's energy security and economic well-being. The dams on our rivers already provide hydropower; we have the ability to grow the feedstock required for biofuel; and the sun shines on our wide array of solar manufacturing and electricity production facilities.

And Tennessee has the markets for clean energy. TVA is distributing clean electricity to a growing industrial base, and biofuel can run engines in our airplanes and ground transportation vehicles.

All the pieces needed for success are already here. What we need now is the time, and the public and private support, to put them together.

Early Tennesseans crossed wild mountains and navigated perilous rivers to settle the valleys and plateaus of our state. Each generation since has seized opportunities to make the lives of the next

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generation better. Right now, we have that opportunity to look to the future, not the past to ensure our nation's energy security and enrich our children's lives.

Lt. Gen. John G. Castellaw, USMC (ret.) served as deputy commandant for Marine Corps Aviation from 2005 to 2007. He is a member of the Consensus for American Security and the president of the Crockett Policy Institute. He lives on the family farm near Alamo, Tenn.

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