



ENERGY BACKGROUND

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Power to the People!

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Making the Switch

It used to be that corporations controlled the power—now it can be everyone. It used to be all about fossil fuels—now it can be all about clean renewable energy.

Here's how our energy industry has worked so far. Corporations extract fossil fuels—oil, coal, and natural gas—from the earth and then transport, refine, process, and sell them to utility companies. The utility companies burn the fossil fuels in "power plants" to produce electricity, which is then sold and transported through "power grids" to their customers in homes and businesses. The utility companies own the power plants, the power grids, and the electricity produced. So they can set the prices for the electricity they sell, and favor fossil fuels over renewable energy. They have little motivation to invest in renewables.

Governments use some of the taxes they collect from their citizens to give tax breaks, subsidies, and other incentives to the fossil fuel industries. Globally, this support amounts to about US\$300 billion each year.

Governments have been supporting the old system for decades—yet, this system has not been able to bring energy to all the people in the world. The poorest third of the world's population is still without reliable energy while resources are already getting scarce. In order to provide everyone with energy, the wealthy population has to stop its excessive fossil fuel consumption and reduce its energy use through efficiency and conservation. With the urgent need to reduce CO₂ emissions, it is equally clear that everyone must switch from burning dirty fossil fuels—that account for 75% of CO₂ emissions—to using clean renewable energy.

Our current energy systems—along with

their subsidies—have been in place for a long time. They have a lot of inertia and a large number of well-connected individuals and corporations who benefit and who do not want them to change. This makes it difficult, and often impossible, for producers of clean renewable energy to compete in this fossil-fuel entrenched world. Currently, renewable energy receives only 3.7% of all subsidies in the energy industry.

Governments need to step in and take effective action to level the energy playing field and speed up the switch from fossil fuels to renewables. To expand the green energy marketplace, governments need to:

- Stop subsidizing the fossil fuel industries, and redirect these subsidies to support the widespread, decentralized, and efficient production and use of renewable energy.
- Enact legislation to guarantee that producers of renewable energy (homeowners, citizen groups, farmers, small and large businesses, etc.) can sell the electricity they produce to utility companies for a set price over a specific period of time.

This will make our energy system more democratic and allows for many individuals and small enterprises to participate: they can set up their solar panels, wind generators, etc., and become producers of clean renewable energy.

MOST EFFECTIVE MODEL Germany, Spain, Denmark, Ontario, Canada and over 40 other countries, states and provinces have legislation like this in place. They are leading the world in switching from fossil fuels to renewable energy. Germany, Spain and Denmark together produce 53% of the total wind energy worldwide. Germany now has 1.3 million solar panels in place and reached its target of producing 12.5% of its energy renewably in 2007—three years early. They have already reduced their CO₂ emissions by 18.5% (compared to 1990 levels) and are on track to meet their target of a 40% reduction by 2020.

RENEWABLE ENERGY = HOMELAND SECURITY



Producing their own renewable energy protects their environment, stimulates and stabilizes their economy, creates hundreds of thousands of jobs, increases their energy independence and helps the global climate.

The type of legislation behind this success story has been called a Feed In Tariff (FIT), but we think it should be called "the world's best renewable energy law." It has proven to promote the fastest, cheapest, and widest growth of renewable energy. Its core principles are: 1. access to the power grid, 2. long-term guaranteed prices, and 3. no limit to the amount of renewable energy that can be sold to the utility companies.

Learn more about these principles of FIT laws and how state governments can develop their own legislation based on this successful model. Visit: WWW.POWER-TO-THE-PEOPLE.NET.

"The world could become unlivable if we do not stop increasing the amount of carbon dioxide we use. CO₂ accumulates in the atmosphere and there is no end-point; it just gets hotter and hotter. So at some point the planet becomes unlivable."

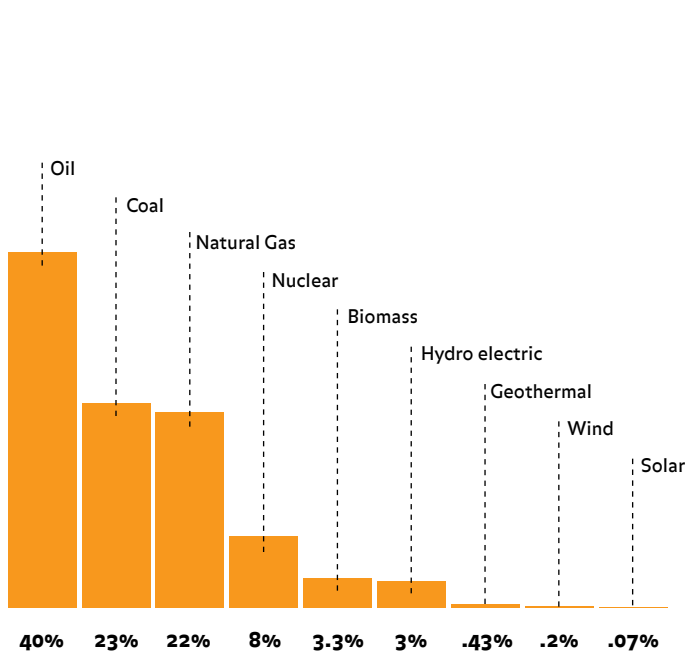
John H. Marburger III, President Bush's Science Advisor and Director of the Office of Science and Technology

"Renewable energy is the issue of the day, and the issue of our generation."

Senate Majority Leader, Barbara Boxer

2005 Source of US Energy Supply

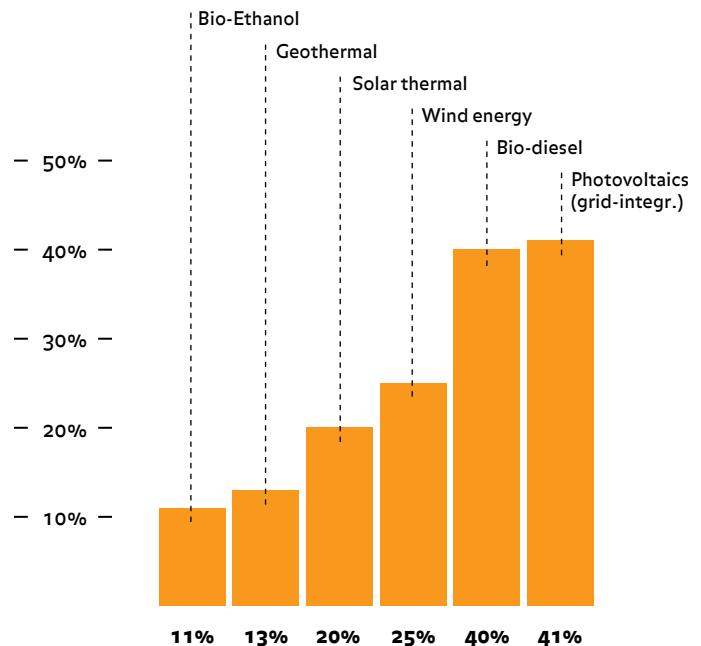
100,942 BTUs



Source: Energy Information Administration, official energy statistics from the US Department of Energy

Worldwide Growth Rates of Renewable Energy

Average 2001–2006



Source: REN 21; 2/2007

