

## ENERGY AND GAS PRICES

Past statements from Dean and the DNC are giving an impression that the Democrats' sole priority (with respect to the current "energy crisis") is to lower gas prices, and that the Democrats are actually *opposed* to the idea that Americans should be asked to conserve energy. The resulting impression is that the Democrats are insincerely pandering to the electorate and are missing a golden opportunity to show bold vision and leadership in dealing with this critically important issue.

As current global forces have placed a strain on the supply of oil and gas, Americans have suffered from higher prices at the pump and will certainly feel the squeeze when they receive their winter heating bill. But the global supply shortage has not only cut into Americans' disposable income but has also injected enormous uncertainty into their daily lives. These price increases and volatility will also cut into the bottom line of many small and medium sized- firms not to mention large firms that together provide millions of jobs for Americans . With such uncertainty U.S. companies are less enthusiastic about investing and hiring, two crucial elements to a sustainable competitive economy. THIS WILL HAVE PROFOUND AFFECTS ON THE QUALITY OF AMERICAN LIFE. There are steps that could be taken to slow the rate of price increases, but this is just a short-term "Band-aid" solution. It does not help the country address the larger, underlying oil-addiction problem. (And as a doctor, Dean should know that a chronic addiction problem cannot be healed with a Band-aid!).

Dean's vague references to "energy independence" do not give any sense of what actual alternative policies the Democrats stand for. The Senate Democrats' Energy Independence plan does contain some excellent proposals for stimulating the development and use of clean, renewable energy technologies. Such proposals should be given far more attention in statements from the DNC, rather than putting all the focus on demands for lower gas prices.

A major concern is that one hears almost nothing from the Democrats about the need to reduce our country's oil/gas dependence. Where are the calls for energy conservation and efficiency measures? Where are the calls for better public transportation and land use planning (which could not only lead to huge energy savings, but can also lead to dramatic lifestyle improvements for the millions of Americans who want an alternative to spending their lives stuck in traffic or who cannot afford a car). Enabling and empowering Americans to create a better life for themselves and their children is what has made America great. Shouldn't we continue to pursue that ideal?

The DNC should learn from and endorse efforts such as the Apollo Alliance and Smart Growth America, which are providing bold, exciting strategies for how America can address its current energy problems, while at the same time vastly enhancing our nation's economic competitiveness, security, and quality of life. Furthermore, these initiatives are hugely popular among constituencies that the Democrats are struggling to attract.