

“Bush & Kerry: Competing Visions for U.S. Energy Policy”

by

Marcus D. King, Daniel J. Moss, Neil J. Numark, and Paloma Sarria

SEI, in conjunction with the Georgetown Environmental Law Forum and the Georgetown International Environmental Law Review (GIELR), hosted a discussion on June 24th on the energy policy proposals of the Bush administration and Democratic Presidential candidate John Kerry. The debate took place at the Georgetown University Law Center. **Ira Flatow**, Host and Executive Producer of National Public Radio’s *Talk of the Nation: Science Friday*, served as moderator. The forum featured **David Garman**, Acting Under Secretary of Energy in representation of the Bush Administration and **David Hayes**, Energy and Environmental Advisor to John Kerry and a former Deputy Secretary of the Interior. Energy reporters **Juliet Eilperin** of *The Washington Post*, **John Fialka**, *The Wall Street Journal*, and **Elizabeth Shogren**, *The Los Angeles Times* were panelists at this event. This article summarizes the discussion between Garman, Hayes and the panel of prominent energy journalists.

In his opening remarks, Mr. Hayes, speaking on behalf of Senator Kerry, said that Senator Kerry believes we need an affordable, clean, reliable and sustainable energy economy, and that Senator Kerry is out on the campaign trail talking about energy. In fact, Mr. Hayes labeled energy one of the four main issues of Senator Kerry’s presidential campaign. Mr. Hayes continued by saying that Senator Kerry thinks the US is too reliant upon the Middle East for oil, and that this reliance poses a threat to our national security. He also said that Senator Kerry believes that gas and oil prices are too high, and that if they remain high they could stifle economic growth. In addition, he commented that we are now in competition for scarce resources with other countries, such as China, and that this has to inform our energy policy decisions. Mr. Hayes then laid out the five main issues that Senator Kerry would focus on as president: improving traditional energy supplies, building the technological basis for exploring new energy sources, improving energy efficiency – including a proposal that 20% of our electricity by 2020 should come from renewable energies, investing in infrastructure, and committing to environmental protection.

Under Secretary Garman, in his opening remarks, stressed the fact that President Bush was committed to the same long-term vision of a clean, affordable, reliable and sustainable energy economy as Senator Kerry. In fact, Garman took issue with the title of the event – “Competing Visions for U.S. Energy Policy” – and emphasized that Bush and Kerry actually agree on many energy issues, such as: long-term support for the development of fuel cell technology, production of clean coal, tax credits for the purchase of hybrid cars, construction of a natural gas pipeline in Alaska, clean coal and carbon sequestration, development of LNG capacity, and regulation of mercury emissions. However, Mr. Garman did point out that there were some differences as well, including the fact that President Bush supports oil and gas exploration in the non-wilderness part of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge to limit dependence on foreign oil. Mr. Garman also stressed that President Bush’s energy plan as it was proposed was fairly balanced, stating that there were 54 elements of President Bush’s

national energy plan that dealt with renewable energies. He also pointed out that President Bush's plan contained \$5.3 billion worth of tax incentives for renewable energies and not a "single-dollar" for oil and gas industry. Mr. Garman then went on to stress the Administration's accomplishments including their commitment to carbon sequestration, hydrogen and nuclear energies, feeling that these were far more tangible results than signing the politically untenable Kyoto Treaty.

Each speaker was then allowed a two-minute period for rebuttal, during which Mr. Hayes countered that serious differences do exist between the Bush Administration's and Democratic candidate Kerry's approaches. He specifically noted that the Bush administration focuses too closely on the supply side of energy issues, while Kerry supports new funding for demand side energy management. He also noted that Senator Kerry encourages the establishment of serious targets for renewable portfolio standards as well as efficiency standards. Mr. Garman responded that the administration is focusing on both supply and efficiency because they are the most pragmatic ways to address energy problems, and that increased spending is not the answer.

The participating energy reporters then took turns posing questions to the speakers. The questions focused on various topics, including mercury controls, oil prices, renewable portfolio standards, global climate change, nuclear energy and policy implementation strategies, and targeted both domestic and international policy concerns. In their discussions, both Mr. Hayes and Mr. Garman paid special attention to the role of the U.S. as a member of the international community. Mr. Hayes expressed the belief that the Bush administration's decision to withdraw from the Kyoto Protocol has resulted in the U.S. being perceived as uncooperative by the international community with regard to global climate change. Mr. Garman pointed out that backing out of Kyoto does not mean that the U.S. is not an active participant in international negotiations and referred to the U.S.-led partnerships for hydrogen development and carbon sequestration as examples where the U.S. is at the forefront of discussions on global warming.

Following the conclusion of two rounds of questions by the reporters, Mr. Flatow read questions submitted by members of the audience. Several of the questions chosen covered nuclear issues, while others focused on coal mining, the U.S. renewable energy base, and the prospect of abrupt climate change. In response to a question on Democratic candidate Kerry's alternative to the proposed Yucca Mountain nuclear waste repository if he were elected, Mr. Hayes stated that his candidate believes dialogue is necessary to locate and reach a "Plan B" to Yucca Mountain. Mr. Garman underlined the importance of nuclear energy, commenting that it is integral to any serious worldwide effort to address climate change.

To close the event, both speakers were given five minutes each for final remarks concerning their candidate's position on U.S. energy policy. Mr. Garman delivered the first closing statement, in which he further stressed the need to invest in nuclear energy and carbon sequestration initiatives. He also reiterated the Bush Administration's interest in the potential of a future hydrogen economy and the use of distributed generation technologies. Mr. Hayes, in his statement, expressed Senator Kerry's disappointment with the current administration's policies. He stated that Senator Kerry hopes to dedicate \$20 billion over ten years to an

energy and conservation trust fund, part of which will be used to strengthen the renewable energy industry. Mr. Hayes closed by emphasizing that Senator Kerry strongly believes that we need to make renewable energies a real part of the national energy policy and that Senator Kerry will be there with leadership, funding and commitment to make sure that American workers are at the forefront of the new energy economy. He finally added that John Kerry has a plan for U.S. energy policy and that as President, energy would be one of his top priorities.

For a full transcript of the event, please go to: <http://www.s-e-i.org/bushkerrytranscript.pdf>. You may also contact Marcus King, Research Director at SEI (mking@s-e-i.org or at 202-466-6600) or Paloma Sarria, Project Coordinator at SEI (psarria@s-e-i.org or at 202-466-6600) for further information.