



State of New Mexico

Office of the Governor

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Governor Bill Richardson Gives Keynote Address to National Wildlife Federation

SANTA FE - Governor Bill Richardson gave the keynote speech today, addressing energy policy as it relates to conservation, at the National Wildlife Federation's Annual Meeting in Washington, D.C.

Governor Bill Richardson's Prepared Remarks

I am pleased to be here this morning with all of you folks. You represent the mainstream of conservation here in the United States-hunters, conservationists, activists, advocates, and perhaps surprisingly, both Republicans and Democrats.

Actually, I was not the first choice to be keynote speaker today. They had invited Vice President Cheney. But he couldn't make it...he's already up at ANWR getting ready to drill.

Seriously though, it was a great honor to receive the National Wildlife Federation conservation award last night. Actually, by the time they got to me, I think it was early this morning.

I want to thank Larry Schweiger and Becky Scheibelhut. As well as Oscar Simpson from the New Mexico Wildlife Federation.

The work you all do in Washington and in the states is so important to our future. The more than 4 million members and 46 state organizations do great things to protect our natural - and national -- treasures. And I thank you-not just as a public official, but also as someone who cares deeply about protecting our natural resources and wildlife.

I have worked with NWF, and the New Mexico Wildlife Federation, for decades now. We've had a great working relationship. I know you and your people, and recognize how effective, realistic, and dedicated you are.

The Nation's Energy Future

Let me start with a strong, clear statement about this Nation's energy future:

The United States has done more for conservation than any other country on earth. But we are not going to solve our energy problems by risking our wildlife heritage and our environmental future.

Instead, we are going to create jobs, conserve resources, enhance our national security, and reduce terrorism by developing alternative energy sources and energy efficiency. By diversifying our energy sources, and making them more sustainable.

Yes, it can be that simple.

What's at Stake

If we don't change direction soon, our country's conservation heritage will fade away.

We have known for decades that we need to reduce our dependence on foreign oil.

We have known for decades that we cannot drill our way out of this dependence. Because we are home to only 3 percent of the world's oil and gas while we account for 25 percent of its usage.

While we have improved technologies, reduced environmental impact, and increased energy efficiency for decades, we're still not in a good position.

We just can't keep doing what we have been doing.

The drill-drill-drill approach of this Congress and the Administration is misguided and wrong.

Actually, someone recently sent me a funny article from the satirical newspaper, *The Onion*. The story goes that the EPA was announcing its plans to drop the letters 'E' and 'P' from its name. Since they're not really environmental anymore, and don't do any protecting, the name of "The Agency" better reflects their current function.

Now, this was obviously a fake story...but I think it's a little too close to reality.

The point is: despite what the Bush Administration says, we don't need to drill the Arctic Refuge. We don't need to drill the continental shelf. We don't need to drill 97 percent of the public lands in the West, as the BLM has proposed since the 2004 election. We don't need to drill New Mexico's ecologically sensitive areas - like the Valle Vidal and Otero Mesa. And we don't need to continue our disproportionate greenhouse gas emissions.

In fact, I believe we can't afford to do those things. Their policies are leading to degradation that threatens conservation around the world. Harms land and water management. Hurts the global atmosphere. And jeopardizes the special places beloved by hunters and ranchers, and inhabited by caribou and cutthroat trout, throughout the American West.

What we can and should do is make positive changes.

A Conservation Agenda for America's Energy Future-Leadership in States

In the absence of leadership from the federal government, we can look to the states for answers. Today, that's where the laboratories of innovation are when it comes to public policy-including energy and conservation issues.

Governors are activists. They get things done. And they are making policy every day all around the country.

As Chair of the Democratic Governors Association, I see an important role for governors. To establish the Democratic policy agenda. To enact sensible, useful conservation policies. And to be on the "front lines" in the fight against bad federal policies.

The environment shouldn't be a partisan issue - look at Republican Governors like Arnold Schwarzenegger and George Pataki - but the fact is that the GOP Administration and Congress have a bad record on conservation, and they ought to be doing more. In the West, conservation could have been a more significant issue in the '04 elections. And I think it will be in the future. The West is going to be more and more of a political battleground in future elections.

And Democrats who were successful-such as Montana Governor Brian Schweitzer and Senator Ken Salazar from Colorado-addressed conservation issues head-on. They brought hunters, anglers, and conservationists together. Ultimately, on their side.

New Mexico is a perfect example of how we can move forward on the state level. We represent what tomorrow's America will look like-in terms of demographics, cultural diversity, and population growth. We also are a state virtually united behind clean energy development, conservation, and environmental protection.

A year ago, I declared New Mexico the "Clean Energy State."

Since then, I have worked with the New Mexico Legislature to enact a series of clean energy and conservation policies.

We've worked closely with hunters, ranchers, and farmers on conservation and access issues. We've protected natural habitats and roadless areas.

And just last week, we passed a Clean Energy Revenue Bond initiative-which will combine energy efficiency and solar energy to provide cost savings for taxpayers. It's the first of its kind in the country.

We've also been hard at work in the Western Governors' Association-where Governor Schwarzenegger and I have started up a new clean energy project.- 30,000 megawatts of clean energy by 2105, and a 20% increase in energy efficiency by 2020.

We are reaching for regional energy policies that will strengthen our economies and conserve our natural resources. National and international companies have invested millions in new clean energy concepts in our states.

We aren't doing these things because of any narrow-minded agenda. We are doing them because there's a terrible leadership vacuum in Washington, and our Nation's energy future is at stake.

We are taking these actions to create jobs, stabilize the economy, reduce our dependence on foreign oil, quit funding terrorists, and bring back some environmental balance.

A Bipartisan, Federal Energy Policy

Since 2000, Americans have spent an extra \$150 billion on high-priced natural gas. And another \$125 billion for high-priced gasoline in the past 18 months. Oil hovers around \$55 a barrel. Gas is over \$2 a tank in a lot of places, and rising. Even before the Iraq war, we were spending \$60 billion annually to protect our interests in the Middle East.

The folks in Congress and the Administration can complain about the costs of investing in alternative energy and energy efficiency. But these costs would be minuscule compared to the amount of taxpayers' money poured into producing and protecting high-priced fossil fuels.

It's time to turn this Nation's energy policy in an entirely new direction. No nation on Earth is better positioned to provide energy leadership for the rest of the world.

So here's an outline of the major elements of a new national energy policy - one that requires leadership and cooperation, one that will enhance our economy and our environment.

First, we need to work on energy efficiency.

We need new building codes to improve energy efficiency by 50 percent, increased incentives for automobiles to meet higher standards and use new hybrid technologies, and higher efficiency standards on appliances.

We need incentives that help industry and homeowners switch fuels, reducing the demand for natural gas.

We need to improve the efficiency of our transmission lines, engines, and fuel cells.

Industry and environmentalists agree: efficiency is the best place for our first investments in a new energy policy.

Second, we need alternative energy sources.

Congress needs to enact wind power production tax credits that the industry can rely on - not another measly 14-month extension like the one adopted late last year.

We should have an investment tax credit for technologies that help store renewable energy-such as hydrogen and compressed air. Making renewable energy more reliable, and a bigger player in the free market. And public transportation should be better funded.

If we don't invest in alternative energy, our Nation will continue its dangerous dependence on oil and gas. It's time to set alternative energy free.

Third, Congress and the Administration should respect this Nation's environmental laws - laws that protect the public health, protect our families and communities, and create a level playing field for clean energy.

They want to weaken the Clean Air Act. They want to drill on public lands. And they want to chip away at the Safe Drinking Water Act.

Along with many other Governors, I am doing what I can to fight the senseless policies from Washington. We are on the front lines. And we can push the federal government to take positive steps:

We need the market-based cap-and-trade approach to greenhouse gas emissions represented in the bipartisan McCain-Lieberman Act.

We need a commitment to new zero-emission technologies, such as coal gasification. We need a reliability law to reduce blackouts. And we need transmission planning to get renewable energy from rural areas in the West to the larger markets where people live.

We can do these things in ways that protect wildlife and create a better environmental future.

Conclusion

In the West, our land and natural resources are embedded in our history and culture. It is part of who we are. It's why we have such a great respect for our environment and wildlife. We also recognize that it's part of our livelihood and our quality of life.

These are not just fringe issues we're talking about. This goes beyond stopping a forest from getting bulldozed over. It's more than saving an endangered animal. And it's more than political and court fights in Washington.

It's about a greater responsibility to protect and preserve the world we live in.

So let's get out there. Let's be positive. Let's be inclusive. And let's work together across these United States, across industries and interests, to move America forward.

We can implement sweeping change in this Nation. We've done it before. And with all of your good work, we can do it again. Thank you and good luck out there.

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