

## Political winds favor energy initiatives (The News Journal)

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By RUSSELL W. PETERSON

Gov.-elect Jack Markell has the opportunity to demonstrate how Delaware can contribute to solving our nation's serious energy crisis.

He has demonstrated in both the industrial and government arenas a special talent for problem solving and motivating diverse groups to work together. Now he has a mandate from the people of Delaware to lead us.

Burning fossil fuels -- coal, oil and natural gas -- causes the global energy crisis. These resources are unevenly and remotely distributed, and demand for them will soon exceed supply. Most critically, burning releases carbon dioxide, which causes global warming and climate change. Nothing exceeds its long-term threat to quality of life on the planet.

We must reduce burning of fossil fuels as soon as possible.

We need to use energy more efficiently and develop sustainable, renewable sources of clean energy such as wind, solar and geothermal.

Markell's "Blueprint for a Better Delaware" called for such action. It's time to implement it with big decisions and bold strokes.

I encourage Markell to establish a Delaware Energy Crisis Task Force, headed by an energy czar, with the assignment to involve the whole state and create numerous jobs in the process. All of us can help, especially state and local governments, colleges, businesses, unions, kids and even old-timers like me.

The winds are favorable. Both houses of the Legislature will be firmly under the control of Democrats, freeing the governor from the partisan fighting that accompanies split leadership.

I encourage Markell to invite the speaker of the House and the president pro tem of the Senate to join him in advancing an energy agenda, maybe as co-chairmen of a joint committee of the Legislature.

With the White House and Congress also controlled by the governor's party, he should be better able to gain federal support for his programs. Our two U.S. senators, Tom Carper and the person to be appointed, can be of enormous help. Congressman Mike Castle, a moderate Republican, will almost certainly assist.

Delaware already has a good vehicle for promoting and subsidizing energy-saving equipment and practices in homes and businesses, the Sustainable Energy Utility Act. It needs to be implemented more aggressively, as does the state program that subsidizes solar panels for roofs.

Bluewater  
Wind's program to build a wind energy plant off the coast deserves continuing support. We must try hard to make Delaware the hub for manufacturing towers, turbines and nodules required by the several off-shore energy plants being planned along the Atlantic Coast. This could be an exciting and rewarding venture, helping Delaware face the future with pride.

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