

House Republican Press Release

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Rep. Floren: Letter to the Editor Regarding Energy



By Livvy R. Floren

For far too long energy has been like the weather: everyone talks about it, but no one does anything. Connecticut has the highest electric rates in the continental United States second only to Hawaii. This is totally unacceptable.

Deregulation of electric companies occurred in 1998, and deregulation has been a dismal failure. Since 1998, there has been no systematic planning for the state's energy needs, and there have been no new generating facilities built. We need a comprehensive strategic plan which includes promoting energy efficiency, reducing demand and encouraging cleaner generation.

We should begin by learning from our neighbors in New York state who have begun a "smart meter" initiative which enables consumers to access a broader range of time-differentiated rates and control their energy use. The "smart meter" is an advanced technology meter which identifies consumption in more detail than a conventional meter and communicates usage data to the local utility company for monitoring and billing purposes. The two-way communication provided by the "smart meter" has additional benefits of alerting the electric company to service interruptions and providing information which will improve generation, transmission and distribution design efficiency. The New York Times reports, "A measly 135 of Connecticut Light & Power's 1.1 million residential customers have smart meters." We can and we must do better.

Connecticut should also be looking at the broader energy picture. We need to encourage and stimulate renewable energy technologies like fuel cells, geothermal, biomass, wind, solar and hydro. These are clean and efficient alternative sources of fuel that could supplement electrical generation needs and would help reduce dependence on costly, finite, and environmentally harmful fossil fuels-like oil and coal.

I was employed by the electric utility industry for 25 years and that professional experience leads me to believe that we should also build a nuclear power plant at Millstone. We have two operating units there now (plus one that has been decommissioned). There is adequate room- Dominion Resources owns 475 acres surrounding the plants and has site plans on file. According to The Economist, "The nuclear debate hinges on safety, cost, the environment, and security of supply. Atomic

energy lost favor after a near disaster at Three Mile Island in 1979 and a real one at Chernobyl in 1986.” In my opinion, the engineering technology has been refined and improved, and nuclear power should now be considered a safe, cost efficient and environmentally-friendly option.

The electric utility industry seeks assurances from the General Assembly that the rules will not keep changing year to year. Multimillion dollar investments in new generating plants, new technologies and new transmission and distribution infrastructure require long-term economic stability. Therefore, a “tinker and tweak” legislative mentality must cease and desist.

We should stop talking and start acting. All it takes is political will, courage and accountability. The time is now.