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Bold energy plan can clean up our act

By **Danny Britt** and **Kassidee Fisher**

America is far too reliant on dirty, polluting fossil fuels of the past that subject our economy to major fluctuations in fuel prices and threaten our national security. Moving to energy that is clean, domestic, cheap and safe will take some work but the payoff will be enormous.

Economists for the Center for American Progress and at the University of Massachusetts recently calculated that investing \$150 billion a year for the next decade in building a clean energy economy could create as many as 1.7 million new, well-paying jobs, with 51,210 jobs here in North Carolina.

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The alternative is continuing our dependence on dirty fossil fuels. According to a recent report by Environment North Carolina, between 2010 and 2030 North Carolina will spend 3.5 times the total 2007 earnings of all North Carolina workers on oil, coal and natural gas. By 2030, we will be spending as much as \$34.4 billion on oil alone.

Pollution from fossil fuels is the number one source of air and global warming pollution and a leading source of water pollution. Every dollar we spend on oil, coal and other fossil fuels buys us more global warming pollution, more smog and more asthma attacks.

Our dependence on oil also ties our hands in foreign policy, funds terrorists and entangles us with hostile regimes. America has less than 3 percent of the world's oil reserve yet uses 25 percent of the world's oil supply. In 2007, America spent more than \$360 billion importing fossil fuels, with the vast majority of that money spent on crude oil. Those funds are a direct transfer of wealth from our consumers to oil companies and often-unstable, often-unfriendly foreign governments.

In the long run, pollution from fossil fuels will directly threaten our national security. Rising sea levels, long-term droughts and catastrophic crop failures caused by global warming pollution could push already precarious countries into chaos. Conflict caused by the effects of climate change is a threat to international peace.

When the choice is between paying to uphold a dirty polluting status quo and investing in a new direction for America, clean energy is the clear winner.

President Obama wants to lead America to a clean energy future and has asked Congress to pass a bill that reduces our dependence on oil and shifts toward clean, renewable sources of energy such as wind and solar. The House of Representatives passed its bill in June; now it is up to the Senate to pass a clean energy jobs bill.

President Obama and clean energy leaders in Congress cannot bring about this change alone. Environment North Carolina estimates that Big Oil, Dirty Coal and other polluters have hired 2,000 lobbyists to stop President Obama's energy plan - that's nearly four lobbyists for every member of Congress. Recent news out of Washington indicates that lobbyists hired by the coal industry went so far as to forge letters from constituents to pressure members of Congress to vote against the House bill. To push clean energy plans past Big Oil and its cronies, our senators need to hear from us.

Now is the time for bold and meaningful action on clean energy and global warming. We are calling on Sen. Kay Hagan to pass a strong clean energy jobs bill that will unleash the power of clean energy to rebuild our economy, protect our environment and build a more sustainable, more secure future.

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