

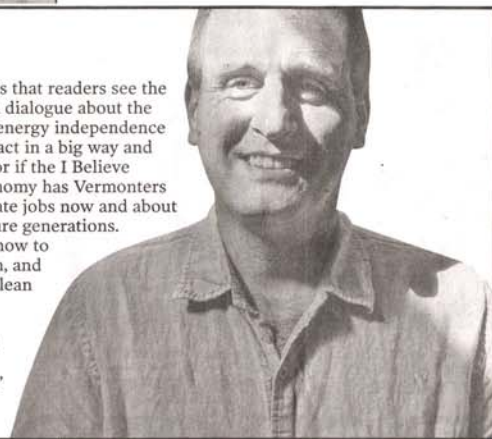
I BELIEVE

'Our energy future must build on the buy-local movement'



Scott Johnstone

"My hope in writing this essay is that readers see the opportunity to move away from dialogue about the need for action on climate and energy independence to a realization that it's time to act in a big way and soon," says Johnstone, the author of the I Believe essay on Page 3D. "Today's economy has Vermonters thinking both about how to create jobs now and about the health and wellbeing of future generations. The fact that we already know how to create this new future condition, and that getting there can create a clean economy, provides us all hope, which I believe will let readers begin to raise their voice, make changes in their own lives and simply demand action of us all."



Scott Johnstone heads the Vermont Energy Investment Corp., a nonprofit energy-services organization best known for operating Efficiency Vermont, the state's nationally acclaimed, statewide energy-efficiency utility.

GLENN RUSSELL, Free Press

I believe time's a wastin'!
In the face of undeniable evidence that global climate change threatens our environment, our health and our economic future, we continue to focus on slow, incremental progress. What we need is a bold vision for what it will take to address this challenge — and use it as an opportunity to create jobs in Vermont.

Scott Johnstone
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President Obama has called for a new national focus on energy independence. As a recognized national leader, Vermont can respond to that call by leveraging the guidance and experience of its green leaders, and rallying around a united commitment to investing in efficiency, greening our energy supply, buying local and connecting these energy issues. These steps will strengthen our state's place at the forefront of the energy-efficiency and clean-energy movement.

Efficiency simply means investing in solutions that assure we don't waste energy. It's old-fashioned Yankee common sense, updated to meet the challenges of global climate change. It also turns out to be the cheapest energy we can "buy." Efficiency costs 2.9 cents per kilowatt hour, less than one-quarter the cost of comparable electric supply, according to Efficiency Vermont.

Efficiency in our homes and offices means we insulate better, optimize how the mechanical systems run and update old equipment with more-efficient equipment, quite easily and cost effectively. At every step of the way skilled workers are needed to analyze the best efficiency efforts, install lighting, insulation or equipment, and verify savings, creating a sustainable source of good-paying jobs for Vermonters.

In the area of transportation, making more fuel-efficient cars is just the tip of the iceberg. Why not focus on mobility and access at the lowest cost as the goal of our transportation policy? We'd find that biking, car sharing and solutions including telecommuting, rail, and transit would allow us to be mobile, but with a drastically lighter carbon footprint and cost. Many groups already are providing such services. Now we need to build on these services and create real transportation choice for Vermonters.

Greening our energy sources means the energy we are not saving through efficiency is produced in the most sustainable way possible. If we invest the savings we garner from efficiency, create new investment resources through cap-and-trade programs and make incentives for the markets to produce better, cheaper solar panels, wind turbines, heat pumps, micro turbines and other such products, we will transform markets, reduce energy prices and lower our reliance on foreign oil and other energy sources that contribute to global climate change.

I believe Vermont affordably can reach a 100 percent renewable electrical energy platform by 2020 if we just decide to do it.

Achieving energy independence requires a "buy local" focus, supporting your neighbors and keeping dollars in the local economy. Renewable energy generation, whether on your home or in your community, works best close

to home. By doing so, we keep our dollars in our towns, our state and our nation, and we employ members of our community.

Buying local has another important benefit. Having a wide array of energy sources distributed around a community or region provides greater security that your power will stay on, because no single source is being relied upon, and minimizes the need for transmission of electricity.

I believe our energy future must build on the buy-local movement.

Connecting all the issues simply means we have to stop thinking about electricity, home heating or transportation energy on their own. Instead, we need to consider all of our energy sources and uses as part of a broader picture.

The energy required to support a particular activity, even the energy effects of how we choose to live our lives, needs to be part of the discussion.

Where we live, how much we drive and how big a house we choose to live in are decisions that have a real effect on energy usage and our shared environment.

I believe if we focus on these principles, we will discover that it's possible and affordable to do something bold about global climate change, especially compared to the cost of doing nothing or of continuing to rely upon an inevitably declining supply of fossil fuels.

This effort will put Vermonters and Americans back to work, perhaps more than any other sector. The McKinsey & Co. global consulting firm recently estimated that investments in energy efficiency alone could create up to 900,000 jobs. How many of those jobs do we want here in Vermont?

I believe we can and we must take advantage of this unique moment in history to join these issues together and act on a bold vision that protects our planet and strengthens our economy — but time's a wastin'.