

Penta Policy Insiders

The Pursuit of Energy Security



Introduction

The United States is the leading producer of oil in the global energy market, but still relies on several foreign powers for petroleum imports. This continued dependence on external sources has brought the concept of energy security to the forefront of policymaker conversations.¹ Energy security is defined as “the uninterrupted availability of energy sources at an affordable price.”² Policymakers agree that the U.S. still has work to do in order to be energy secure, particularly given the energy market’s susceptibility to the actions of other global powers. Moreover, American consumers are interested in seeing a stable price at the gas pump, making energy security the optimal goal for both citizens and policymakers.³



I don't think people understand the importance of not only producing American jobs but also lower energy costs to consumers. The whole concept of energy security, I don't think people understand that enough.

Former Chief of Staff, U.S. Senate, R



Even if we focus on domestic oil production, the second that there is an issue at home, a hurricane knocks out an oil derrick or whatever, **we're going to go back to those same foreign sources to fill in the gaps.**

Chief of Staff, U.S. House of Representatives, D



Geopolitical lens

Despite accounting for 20 percent of oil production worldwide, the U.S. still relies heavily on imports from countries, and often countries where political tensions can run high. Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022, for example, showcased how political conflict among foreign powers can disrupt the global energy market, bringing into sharp focus the economic repercussions of relying on oil imports from other countries. Policy leaders are concerned that as long as the United States needs the global market for energy, important foreign and economic policy decisions will always be subject to some level of international influence.⁴



The truth is everything is bought and sold on the international market... as long as you're purchasing a commodity, **you're going to have to deal with what the global market impacts are.**

Legislative Director, U.S. House of Representatives, D

Achieving energy security

Regardless of the means, achieving energy security is no easy feat, as it would require significant innovations and changes to the domestic energy industry. Policymakers emphasize the importance of evaluating options such as increased drilling or alternate forms of clean energy, and considering how they will affect the American consumer and economy. Although there is agreement amongst policymakers that continuing to strive for energy security is important, there are differing opinions on the best strategy.



For example, some want to see an increased focus on oil drilling domestically...



Drilling and domestic production is really important. I don't think that's an area that we're focused on enough.... It's not acceptable that **we're always depending on other foreign countries. We can take advantage of the production in our own country.**

Former Deputy Chief of Staff, U.S. Senate, R



I don't think drilling for more things here domestically is a realistic approach to energy independence considering the years and years and years it can take to actually develop new wells.

Legislative Director, U.S. House of Representatives, D



... while others are pushing to move away from oil and pursue what they describe as more sustainable alternatives.



There's a finite supply of fossil fuels whether we're getting them from the Middle East or whether we're drilling offshore here at home. And at the end of the day, I think **the real way to energy independence is to develop and build out our own renewable energy infrastructure.**

Chief of Staff, U.S. House of Representatives, D



We definitely **need to try to work towards more renewables**, but maybe lengthen that approach out to kind of slow the impact of these sudden price hikes that we've seen as far as coming down to the American family on higher energy costs.

Director, U.S. Senate, R

Some policymakers believe the best option is pursuing clean energy and focusing on developing infrastructure that can support a transition away from oil and fossil fuels. Proponents of this avenue of action argue that developing clean energy resources will create jobs and strengthen the economy, as well as have a positive impact on the environment. However, there are also concerns that technology has not evolved enough to successfully support the transition to clean energy.

Conclusion

Achieving energy security is a goal for many policy leaders in order to protect the country from events impacting the global market. Since there are currently no significant substitutes for oil in the global economy, international conflict can negatively impact the market and limit the supply of fuel or raise costs, hindering economic development and growth. Oil powers endless aspects of everyday life as it sustains necessary functions like public transportation, electricity, and factories that produce food and almost every other good Americans rely on. As policymakers continue to debate the best options for energy security, they are looking at a number of factors including current technologies, costs of different types of energy, and timelines for implementation to help determine the most feasible and lasting solutions. Given its ties to a multitude of essential domestic functions, policymakers agree that energy security is crucial for the continued growth and development of the United States.



The immediate need of the next 10 to 15 years is still going to be a heavy, heavy, heavy need for infrastructure and development of oil and gas in the United States.... unless some kind of amazing technology development comes that all of a sudden you can build a base layer of supply of energy off of renewables, which is, to my understanding, not really feasible at this point in time.

Former Chief of Staff, Executive, R



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