



## Guest column: Can Idaho become an energy producer?

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***Ann Rydalch***

Idaho could lead the nation in clean energy — but only if state leadership helps, writes Ann Rydalch.

The United States has prospered due in part to the electrification of its communities. Electricity spurs our economy — enabling technology advances, health care advances, economic prosperity, modern day convenience and perhaps even overall human wellbeing. It is something we take for granted because it is convenient. We flip a switch and just know the lights will turn on.

Or will they?

Energy policy in this country is rapidly deteriorating. Special interests work to polarize policy makers, anti-groups work to demonize resources and the general public loses site of the big picture for personal interests. Does Idaho have the courage to choose a path forward on energy?

We had our chance in the '70s to continue developing the needed technology for nuclear energy which included recycling, but the United States gave up. The rest of the world did not. Japan, France, Britain, Russia and others are all now in the nuclear and fuel-recycling business. They kept trying to solve the waste problem.

Because of expertise at the Idaho National Lab (INL), Idaho is positioned to be a leader in clean energy choices. It has been a leader in nuclear energy for many years. The INL has a long history, since the 1950s, in the development of nuclear reactor designs, as well as in fuel reprocessing and waste management. And, Idaho was the first state to light a town with nuclear power.

So how does Idaho become an energy producing state?

Perhaps our state leaders could provide a property tax/sales tax/income tax exemption, credit, or rebate if a plant is built that produces electricity. Or, state leaders could create a state authority like the building authority to issue bonds to build energy producing facilities for sale either in Idaho or outside Idaho. This state authority may have to invest in upgrading transmission systems, especially if the power is to be sold out of state. Or, the Legislature could suggest the Idaho Water Resource Board amend the Comprehensive State Water Plan to encourage more hydroelectric producing dams.

Energy development means economic development. What would happen if businesses did not have the energy available to run their businesses and provide jobs? There are nine industries that use over 75 percent of the nation's energy. That's not a bad thing as it is a reality that these industries provide jobs. Those nine industries are agriculture, aluminum, chemical, forest products, glass products,

metalcasting/machining, mining, petroleum and steel. There needs to be a balanced portfolio of stable energy choices for businesses in order to provide jobs.

Whether it's turning on a light switch in our homes or businesses having ample energy to run that business and provide jobs, energy – and the need for it – involves everyone. My dream is to have Idaho become an energy producing state.

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**Ann Rydalch served 11 years in the Idaho Legislature and seven years as chairwoman of the Energy Committee for the National Foundation for Women Legislators.**