

# Washington Energy Maverick

HELPING CONGRESS DEAL WITH ENERGY

BY DARRELL DELAMAIDE

## ■ ■ ■ JAY INSLEE, A DEMOCRATIC

■ ■ ■ congressman from Washington state, grew up in sight of Mt. Rainier, the volcanic peak that lies about 50 miles southeast of Seattle. Now he worries that the Alpine meadows and ski slopes of his childhood are disappearing.

"This is not an abstract thing," says Inslee. "There are no salmon in the streams, no snow on the lower slopes." The tree line is creeping up the slope, he says, eliminating those meadows and many of the delicate flowers that flourished there.

There's nothing abstract about Inslee's reaction to all this either. The Washington congressman is establishing himself as one of a new breed of legislators pushing an energy agenda in the other Washington, the nation's capital. Inslee was one of eight Democrats appointed last year to the newly formed House Select Committee on Energy Independence and Global Warming. He was already a member of the House Committee on Energy and Commerce and co-author of a book on energy policy, "Apollo's Fire: Igniting America's Clean Energy Economy."

Inslee and a group of other lawmakers backing a clean energy agenda helped pass the Energy Independence and Security Act of 2007 last December, one of the first-100-day projects House Speaker Nancy Pelosi championed when Democrats gained control of the House last year.

"He is a rising star, he really is," says Bill Wicker, Democratic spokesman for the Senate Energy Committee, a longtime observer of energy politics on Capitol Hill.

"The 111th Congress could be a breakout moment," he says. "Inslee has that potential of leadership."

Several of the provisions in the 2007 energy act – the increase in CAFE standards for gasoline mileage, a renewable fuels standard for biofuels, and other standards for lighting and green buildings – mirror clauses in a comprehensive energy act introduced by Inslee in 2005, the New Apollo Energy Act. The legislation, like the book, calls for the nation to marshal its resources to meet the energy challenge in the same way that the original Apollo project met President John F. Kennedy's challenge to put a man on the moon in the 1960s.



Jay Inslee

Among his Democratic colleagues in the House, Inslee lists Mark Udall, son of the former Arizona congressman Mo Udall, and Diana DeGette of Colorado, Hilda Solis and Lois Capps of California, and Earl Blumenauer of Oregon, among others, as strong backers of clean energy efforts. Among Senate Democrats, Wicker names Ken Salazar of Colorado, Robert Menendez of New Jersey and Jon Tester of Montana as particularly active on the energy front.

"Unfortunately, global warming became a political issue when it didn't have to," Inslee says. Particularly under the Bush administration, the whole issue of global warming, which Inslee says overlaps about 90 percent with energy issues, has divided along party lines.

But this may not last, Inslee suggests. "The public is way ahead of Congress on this issue," he says. Even Republicans "are starting to recognize this as an electoral issue."

One way or the other, Inslee says confidently, Congress will pass a cap-and-trade program for carbon emissions by the fall of 2009. This type of program, which sets limits on carbon emissions by companies and allows them to trade carbon credits in order to meet these limits, is one of the tenets of Inslee's Apollo bill, which was introduced with 14 co-sponsors.

Other key provisions include a renewable portfolio standard requiring all utilities to produce 10 percent of their electricity from renewable energy sources by 2021; federal support for the commercialization of carbon sequestration, coal gasification, and low-emission coal technologies; a requirement for new federal buildings to be constructed using the LEED silver standard for energy efficiency; tax credits for the installation of minimum-emission coal technologies; government credit for the creation of new electricity transmission lines to receive power from remote clean resources; and national net-metering and interconnection standards that allow homeowners who generate

clean energy to reduce their energy bills by feeding surplus electricity back into the grid.

Inslee, 57, has represented Washington's 1st District, the suburbs west of Seattle, since 1998. From 1992 to 1994, he represented the state's 4th District and in 1996 made an unsuccessful run for the Democratic nomination for governor.

Inslee says he approaches energy issues "with the heart of an environmentalist and the head of an economist."

For Inslee and a growing number of his colleagues in Congress, this amounts to a manifesto: "We want a clean energy revolution," he says. "Climate change and energy security demand a revolution."

# Incenting Clean Energy

LEARNING FROM GERMANY

BY REP. JAY INSLEE

**EDITOR'S NOTE** *The following article recently appeared in Roll Call. It has been edited for length and style.*

■ ■ **THOUGH THE FIRST MODERN SOLAR**  
■ ■ ■ cell was invented in the United States during the 1950s, Germany now boasts 55 percent of the world's installed solar capacity.

I learned how this reversal happened during a Congressional fact-finding trip to Germany in February. When I was in Silicon Saxony touring a chip manufacturing plant, I asked the company's chief if he knew any solar-cell experts.

He walked me across the street, where I was able to spend two hours at one of the most successful solar-cell manufacturing companies in Europe. Not only did I see firsthand the amazing process of turning sunlight into electricity, I also received a tutorial on the policy that catapulted Germany into the lead in solar energy.

Germans call it a feed-in tariff. Others, like me, call it a performance-based incentive policy. No matter what you call it, this policy works just like a production tax credit in that clean-energy generators are rewarded for the electricity they produce. It guarantees interconnection to the grid, and through long-term power-purchasing contracts, clean-energy entrepreneurs are paid technology-specific, profitable rates for the power they produce.

This approach creates the perfect complement to state or federal renewable-electricity standards by supporting a broad range of available renewable-energy technologies.

In Germany, renewable energy in the nation's electricity mix has increased from 6 percent to 14 percent, exceeding a 2010 target three years ahead of schedule. In fact, Germany operates more wind

generation, more solar installations and more biogas plants than any other nation.

Germany's law is credited with adding more than 140,000 jobs to the nation's economy in just over five years.

Similar policies have been implemented worldwide, in 40 other countries, provinces and states, including Ontario, France and Spain. Now it's time to adopt one in the United States as part of a New Apollo Project, aimed at marshalling national resources to do for clean energy what we did for space under President John F. Kennedy's original Apollo project in the 1960s.

In December, Congress started the countdown to a clean-energy revolution with passage of an energy bill that included auto-efficiency standards, a renewable-fuels standard and improvements in home and appliance efficiency.

Since then, both chambers have advanced the countdown by approving energy-tax packages to extend and expand existing incentives for consumers and energy producers. We also have taken steps toward establishing a U.S. cap on greenhouse gas emissions.

I will support a Clean Energy Buy-Back Act in the House. My bill may be the first performance-based incentive policy proposal before Congress, but these policies are not completely new to the United States. In fact, Michigan, Illinois, Minnesota, Rhode Island, Hawaii and California already are considering the adoption of such policies. And my home state of Washington has a similar but narrower law on the books to promote solar photovoltaics.

To reap the impressive clean-energy technology adoption rates and economic growth seen in Germany, we need a national standard that provides real investment security for U.S. clean-energy industries. A federal performance-based incentive policy is a proven tool that can meet the energy challenges that we face at the pace, scope and scale that Americans are demanding.

The countdown has started. When the revolution takes off, Germany will have a fierce competitor when it comes to world pre-eminence in solar capacity and other clean-energy technologies.