



## The Patriot-News

### Coal to fuel

#### Use domestic resources to ease dependence on foreign oil

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Nobody argues that the United States is far too dependent on foreign oil. But what to do about it generates a hugely contentious debate.

Environmental special interest groups continue to stand in the way of further exploration for and extraction of our own domestic energy resources. They respond to the growing crisis by demanding instead that we all drive less and turn to exotic, unproven sources of energy.

No one disagrees that diversifying our energy sources is a good idea. But if we really want to break free of our growing dependence on oil controlled by unstable and hostile governments, we must use our domestic resource wealth to produce transportation fuels here in America and do so in an environmentally sensitive way.

Maximizing the energy we produce at home requires that we end the self-destructive perpetual standoff that continues to paralyze efforts to increase domestic fuel production. This paralysis in energy policy continues to threaten our national security and put our economy at risk.

One source of fuel that can and should become a big part of the American energy mix isn't being used at all today. It's called coal-to-liquid fuels, or CTL. It is already widely used in South Africa, and many of America's chief economic rivals, such as China, are investing billions to build CTL plants.

In our state, the CTL plant we are advancing will use anthracite waste coal to produce clean transportation fuels and create 1,000 high-paying jobs during construction and an additional 660 high quality primary and secondary permanent jobs. In addition, the plant will also produce much needed local, state and federal government tax revenues.

CTL technology is proven and ready for use in today's engines. CTL fuels are clean and free of carcinogens. They are made through a process where the energy stored in coal is unlocked by transforming the coal into a gas, from which numerous impurities are removed, and then transforming the gas into a sulfur-free, high cetane diesel and jet fuel and other potential products. DOMESTIC CTL fuels would be cleaner than the imported fuels they would replace and would help power America's armed forces, commercial aircraft, railroads, ships and other heavy industries. The Air Force has already certified CTL fuels for use in their fleet of B-52 aircraft and hopes to certify their entire fleet to use CTL by 2011. Pentagon officials expect to purchase 400 million gallons of CTL fuel annually by 2016 and have recently contracted for 281,000 gallons for further certification work.

The potential for this country to significantly reduce its dependence on foreign oil by producing clean CTL fuels is enormous.

The U.S. is home to 27 percent of the world's coal reserves -- more than any other nation -- with the energy potential of the entire Middle East's oil reserves. Taking advantage of that enormous resource simply makes good sense.

But environmental special-interest groups are working hard to block development of domestic CTL fuels. Such critics dismiss the fact that CTL fuels when compared to fuels in use today emit dramatically reduced amounts of pollutants such as particulate matter, carbon monoxide, nitrogen oxide and sulfur dioxide. Critics also ignore the ability of domestic CTL producers to co-blend biomass feedstocks, thereby mitigating carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) and also the future potential to deploy advanced carbon capture and storage technologies that eliminate emissions of CO<sub>2</sub> into the atmosphere during the manufacturing process, thus, helping achieve important environmental goals.

Our project in Gilberton creates an appetite for CO2 because of the reclamation of waste coal lands and the planting that occurs concurrent with reclamation. Very little vegetation currently thrives on waste coal banks. CTL WITH BIOMASS co-feed is cleaner, safer, and cheaper than the foreign oil we are displacing. In fact, with foreign oil trading at above \$80 per barrel, for every gallon of domestically produced liquid transportation fuel costing approximately \$1.90 per gallon, an additional \$4.70/gallon of value is added to the domestic economy.

America's national security and economic prosperity cannot continue to be left in the hands of hostile foreign governments or held hostage to the unrealistic agendas of fringe special-interest groups. America needs a responsible and intelligent energy road map based in part on using CTL fuels. Americans can make that happen.

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