



## **Solar, Energy Efficiency & Economic Security**

While I know a lot of us have been thinking about economic security (or rather the lack of it) these past few years, I'm always amazed by how few people see the energy-economy connection strongly enough to actually do something about it. It's a well known fact that we needlessly waste about half the energy we consume and that cost-effective energy alternatives are a better investment than most conventional investments. In other words, we could be spending less on energy costs every month while, at the same time, getting an excellent return on investment if we just put more effort into reducing our household's energy waste!

So mark your calendar now for the Union's upcoming Spring Home and Garden Show on the 24<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> of this month. There will be a number of workshops and demonstrations on energy efficiency and solar, as well as a number of local providers of related products and services to talk to. Earth Day is April 22<sup>nd</sup>, so the workshops and demonstrations will be centralized around Earth Day. I'll be doing a workshop on "One Family's Approach to Sustainable Living" at noon, and will talk about how my own family has enjoyed returns on investment of hundreds of percent, far exceeding the stock market, while making us more comfortable and financially secure in these challenging economic times.

The extent to which the U.S. is dependent on other countries for resources, and the adverse impact this has had on our Nation's economic and national security, is another reason for patriotic Americans to reduce energy waste. The economic growth we've enjoyed during our lives thus far has been fueled, literally and figuratively, by cheap, plentiful fossil fuels. But world oil productions' record year was 2005 and the record month was July 2008, which many believe contributed to the worldwide economic recession. In just the last few months there has been a flurry of reports covering what all this could mean for future economic growth. An excellent source of news on these issues, updated daily from a wide variety of sources, can be read here - <http://www.energybulletin.net>.

What's been happening is that government and oil industry leaders alike have been slowly coming out with warning after warning on the future of the cheap, plentiful resources that have been fueling economic growth as we know it. While there are plenty of these resources left – about half remain by most accounts – they will no longer be cheap to extract or refine, nor will they be able to come on line quickly enough to meet the level of demand required to maintain the level of economic growth we've seen in the past. You've no doubt heard about the industry going after oil in shale rock and tar sands, in ocean waters miles deep, and in remote areas such as the Alaska National Wildlife Reserve (ANWAR). In other words, "conventional oil" has already peaked, and we're now in need of the much more expensive "unconventional oil" to keep the world economy going.

The question is will it be affordable enough to keep the world economy growing? Will energy – the stuff that fuels life as we know it – become too expensive? Will higher and higher energy costs lead to runaway inflation, a lower standard of living, reduce our U.S. household's economic security and, in turn, our national security? Only time will tell but I believe it will unless, to the greatest extent

possible, we put a whole lot more effort and investment into reducing energy waste. The good news is that, in doing so, we can improve our household economy, the national economy, national security, and solve a host of environmental concerns all at the same time. So come out to the Spring Home & Garden show and get started!

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