

[home](#) [about the project](#) [report card](#) [conference](#) [blog](#) [in the news](#) [partners](#) [support the project](#) [contact us](#)

## Keynote Speech by Governor Bill Richardson April 6, 2005

---

### "A New West, A New Energy Policy"

Thank you President Celeste for that introduction. And thank you for having me at the 2005 Rockies Conference. It's great to be here tonight.

#### The West

The Rocky Mountain States—to a large degree—represent what the future of our country will look like. We are home to families and communities—generations old—that reflect and represent strong values of individual rights, civic involvement, and a deep respect for our natural resources.



We are home to fast-growing cities and communities. People come to our states to start a new life, raise their families, or retire into their golden years.

We are home to diverse cultures that will preserve and protect western values, and ensure that new growth does not undermine our traditions, our communities, and our values.

We are home to a large and growing minority population. Hispanic, Native American, Asian American, African American and other communities make up large parts of the population in places like Colorado, Nevada, Arizona, and certainly in New Mexico.

We are home to high-tech businesses, emerging industries, and growing local and regional economies. Job and income growth are on the rise in many of our states.

We are home to quality institutions of higher learning. And skilled workforces that are growing and prospering.

We are home to unmatched natural resources and national treasures.

And we are home to people who care deeply about clean air, land, and water. People who understand that we need a new energy policy to make sure the new West prospers and succeeds.

#### The Nation's Energy Future

So I want to start with a strong, clear statement about the future of energy for our region, and our country: we are not going to solve our energy problems by continuing to do business as usual. Instead, we need a new direction and new policies. We need to create jobs, conserve resources, enhance our national security, and reduce terrorism by developing alternative energy sources and energy efficiency. By diversifying our energy sources, and making them more sustainable. Yes, it can be that simple. But we must recognize our challenges. And recognize what we should do to overcome them.

#### America's Energy Future—Leadership in Western States

Our new energy policy can be driven largely by the leadership in Western states—especially in the absence of leadership from the federal government. Today, the states are home to the real public policy innovations—including energy

issues. Governors are activists. They get things done. And they are making policy every day. As Chair of the Democratic Governors Association, I see an important role for governors. To establish a policy agenda. To enact sensible, useful conservation policies. And to be on the "front lines" in the fight against bad federal policies. And despite the bad record of this Congress and this Administration, environmental and energy policy does not have to be—nor should it be—a partisan issue. It's about people, not politics. Just look at some of the good work that Republican Governors like Arnold Schwarzenegger and George Pataki are doing.

New Mexico is a great example of how we can move forward on the state level. First, we represent what tomorrow's America will look like—in terms of demographics, cultural diversity, and population growth. Second, we are a state virtually united behind clean energy development, conservation, and environmental protection. (I myself have been told that I have a lot of energy. The secret is that I use renewable resources. Some days I'm solar powered. Some days I'm wind powered. And some days my critics just think I'm full of compressed air.)

But in all seriousness, New Mexico is a leader when it comes to energy policy. A year ago, I declared us a "Clean Energy State". Since then, I have worked with the New Mexico Legislature—with both Democrats and Republicans—to enact a series of clean energy and conservation policies. We've worked with industry and advocates to promote and encourage new technologies—including renewable energy tax credits. We've worked closely with hunters, ranchers, and farmers on conservation and access issues. We've protected natural habitats and roadless areas. And just last month, we passed a Clean Energy Revenue Bond initiative—which will combine energy efficiency and solar energy to provide cost savings for taxpayers. New Mexico is the first state in the country to adopt a measure like this.

We've also been hard at work in the Western Governors' Association—where Governor Schwarzenegger and I have started up a new clean energy project. Our goal is to have 30,000 megawatts of clean energy by 2015, and a 20% increase in energy efficiency by 2020. (Governor Schwarzenegger and I actually have a lot in common. We both have diverse ethnic backgrounds. We're both making aggressive changes in our states. And we're both former champion body builders. Well, two out of three isn't bad...)

Joking aside, at the WGA, we are reaching for regional energy policies that will strengthen our economies and conserve our natural resources. National and international companies have invested millions in new clean energy concepts in our states.

We aren't doing these things because of any narrow-minded agenda. We are doing them because there's a terrible leadership vacuum in Washington, and our nation's energy future is at stake.

## **A Bipartisan Energy Policy**

Since 2000, Americans have spent an extra \$150 billion on high-priced natural gas. And another \$125 billion for high-priced gasoline in the past 18 months. Oil hovers around \$58 a barrel. Gas is averaging over \$2 a gallon nationally, and rising. Even before the Iraq war, we were spending \$60 billion annually to protect our interests in the Middle East. It's time to set our national energy policy in an entirely new direction. And no nation on Earth is better positioned to provide energy leadership for the rest of the world.

So here's an outline of the major elements of a new national energy policy. One that requires leadership and cooperation. One that will enhance our economy and our environment. And one that our regional unity and regional influence can help create. First, we need to work on energy efficiency. We need new building codes to improve energy efficiency by 50 percent. We need to increase incentives for automobiles to meet higher standards and use new hybrid technologies. And we should have higher efficiency standards on appliances. We need incentives that help industry and homeowners switch fuels, reducing the demand for natural gas. We need to improve the efficiency of our transmission lines, engines, and fuel cells. Both industry and environmentalists agree: efficiency is the best place for our first investments in a new energy policy.

Second, we need alternative energy sources. Congress needs to enact a tax credit proposal to promote wind power—one that industry can rely on. We should have an investment tax credit for technologies that help store renewable energy—such as hydrogen and compressed air. Making renewable energy more reliable, and a bigger player in the free market. And public transportation should be better funded. If we don't invest in alternative energy, our nation will continue its dangerous dependence on oil and gas. It's time to set alternative energy free.

Third, Congress and the Administration should respect this nation's environmental laws – laws that protect the public health, protect our families and communities, and create a level playing field for clean energy. They want to weaken the Clean Air Act. They want to make drilling the highest priority on practically all of our public lands. And they want to chip away at wetlands protection, offshore drilling moratoria, and the Safe Drinking Water Act. They haven't done all of these things yet. But they want to. As the saying goes, the only thing that saves us from bureaucracy is its inefficiency.

But, along with many other Governors, I am doing what I can to fight the business-as-usual approach from Washington. We are on the front lines. And we can push the federal government to take positive steps: we need a new approach to reduce



greenhouse gas emissions, like the bipartisan plan that Senators John McCain and Joe Lieberman have in the Senate. We need a commitment to new zero-emission technologies, such as clean coal technology. We need to improve the reliability of our electrical grids to reduce the threat of blackouts. And we need transmission planning to get renewable energy from rural areas in the West to the larger markets where people live.

## What's at Stake

We must take these steps, because there's so much at stake. We have known for decades that we need to reduce our dependence on foreign oil. We cannot drill our way out of this dependence. Because we are home to only 3 percent of the world's oil and gas, while we account for 25 percent of its usage. While we have improved technologies, reduced environmental impact, and increased energy efficiency for decades, we still have a lot of work to do.

We just can't keep doing what we have been doing.

And in a lot of places in our country, environmental and energy issues are treated as second-tier problems or fringe issues. But these challenges we face require more, not less, of our time, attention, and effort. Because we all breathe the same air, drink the same water, and live off the same land. So when oil prices are closing in on \$60 per barrel, it impacts us all. Think about all the costs that derive from oil. When gas prices are averaging over \$2.00 per gallon nationally, it impacts every family and business. Think about how many times you fill up your car each month. When prices for home heating oil, electricity, and natural gas increase every year, it impacts every home. Think about all the utility bills each and every month. It's clear: the drill-drill-drill approach of this Congress and this Administration is not the corrective measure we need. And their policies are misguided and wrong.

The point is: we don't need to drill the Arctic Refuge. We don't need to drill the continental shelf. We don't need to drill 97 percent of the public lands in the West, as the BLM has proposed. We don't need to drill in ecologically sensitive areas in the West—like New Mexico's Valle Vidal and Otero Mesa. And we don't need to continue our disproportionate greenhouse gas emissions. In fact, I believe we can't afford to do those things. These policies are leading to degradation that threatens conservation around the world. Harms land and water resources. Hurts the global atmosphere. And jeopardizes the special places beloved by hunters and ranchers throughout the American West.

We cannot let the West become a national sacrifice area for the decades of failed energy policy. We cannot let the West shoulder all the burden for our nation's dependence on fossil fuels. Instead the West can lead the way in energy independence. We can lead in a manner that rewards innovation, develops new technologies, and reflects the Western spirit of doing more and doing better. We can and should make positive changes to establish a new energy policy for our region and our country. Just like we're doing in New Mexico. And just like we're doing in the Western Governor's Association. Our common goal is to create jobs, stabilize the economy, reduce our dependence on foreign oil, quit funding terrorists, and bring back some environmental balance.

## Conclusion

In the West, our land and natural resources are embedded in our history and culture. It is part of who we are. It's why we have such a great respect for our environment and our natural resources. We also recognize that it's part of our livelihood and our quality of life. These are not just fringe issues we're talking about. This goes beyond stopping a forest from getting bulldozed over. It's more than keeping oil rigs out of public lands. And it's more than political and court fights in Washington. It's about a greater responsibility to protect and preserve the world we live in.

The West is changing. It's growing more diverse. More people are coming to live here. And it's gaining more importance and more influence in the political process. So we have an additional responsibility to embrace these changes and be leaders. We live in a new West. And it demands a new energy policy. Not just for our region, but for our entire country.

The future success and prosperity of our families, our businesses, and our communities depends on it. So let's work together across these United States, across industries and interests, to move America forward. We **can** implement sweeping change in this nation. We've done it before. And with all of your support, we can do it again. Thank you.