



MANHATTAN INSTITUTE FOR POLICY RESEARCH

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**NEW REPORT:
Energy and the Environment: Myths and Facts**

Washington, DC: The Center for Energy Policy and the Environment at the Manhattan Institute released a new report by senior fellow Max Schulz. **“Energy and the Environment: Myths and Facts” reveals that Americans’ beliefs about energy and our environment are largely unfounded.**

Sound policy decisions require a well-informed citizenry. But, as Earth Day approaches, we must ask: how well-informed are we regarding our energy needs and natural environment? The Manhattan Institute, along with Zogby International, polled 1,000 Americans about basic facts relating to energy policy. **The poll results reveal that many widely held beliefs are, in key ways, inaccurate.**

In this new report, Max Schulz examines the public perception of energy and the environment; by separating fact from fiction, we present the true story behind America’s energy myths.

Among the findings. . .

MYTH: Most of our energy comes from oil.

Nearly two thirds of respondents believed this to be the case.

FACT: In reality, 60 percent of our energy comes from non-oil sources.

Growing electricity use accounts for over 85 percent of growth in our energy demand since 1980; this deserves greater focus from policy-makers and media.

MYTH: Saudi Arabia provides more oil to the United States than does any other foreign country.

When asked for the largest source of foreign oil, 55 percent guessed Saudi Arabia.

FACT: Canada provides the USA with more foreign oil than any other country.

An erroneous belief in our dependence on Middle Eastern oil leads to an illegitimate fear of having energy used as an economic weapon against us.

MYTH: The accident at the Three Mile Island nuclear power plant was fatal.

Over 80 percent of respondents did not disagree.

FACT: No one died from the accident at Three Mile Island.

Untenable safety concerns prevent a significant reduction in greenhouse gas emissions that could be achieved by turning to nuclear power as an energy source.

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MYTH: Our cities are becoming more polluted and our forests are shrinking.

Nearly 84 percent believe cities are increasingly polluted; 67 percent believe logging and development are shrinking our forests.

FACT: Trends suggest that the air in our cities is becoming cleaner and we are experiencing annual net gains for forest area.

Inaccurate assumptions about our environment encourage onerous regulation and limit urban development.

MYTH: The Kyoto Protocol would require all countries to cut emissions.

Almost 60 percent believe that is, in fact, required by the protocol.

FACT: The Kyoto Protocol has exempted large emitters like China and India; analysts have shown it would be unlikely to reduce global warming.

The cost to the American economy, however, is estimated to be between \$13 billion and \$397 billion in 2010.

MYTH: The US can meet its future energy demand solely through conservation and efficiency measures.

Nearly 70 percent agreed with this statement.

FACT: We will need 30 percent more energy in 2030 than we consume today – not a demand that can be met through mere conservation.

Our needs will be met by introducing new energy sources—like nuclear power.

Despite wide-spread misconceptions among respondents, there was some level of awareness. More than half (50.7 percent) of participants knew we will not run out of oil in this century. And sixty-one percent correctly identified wind and solar power as providing the least amount of energy among a list of major energy sources that included coal, nuclear power, natural gas, and oil.

Energy and the Environment: Myths and Facts is available online at
http://www.manhattan-institute.org/pdf/Energy_and_Environment_Myths.pdf

Max Schulz is a senior fellow at the Center for Energy Policy and the Environment at the Manhattan Institute for Policy Research. Prior to joining the Manhattan Institute, Mr. Schulz served as Senior Policy Advisor and Director of Speechwriting for United States secretaries of energy Samuel Bodman and Spencer Abraham. His work focuses on the practical application of free-market principles in energy debates at the international, federal, and state levels.

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