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## MY TURN

### **Energy: 'We need a completely different direction'**

by Billy Knight

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Drill, Drill, Drill has become the mantra of right-wing Republicans, but a closer look at the facts reveals much about the U.S. oil industry and its partners in pollution and profits — McCain, Bush Cheney and the current leaders in the White House.

While the U.S. oil industry wishes to access more federal lands to help reduce our reliance on foreign oil, or at least, this is what they and their controlled partners would have you believe, things aren't always what they appear to be.

During the first four months of this year, a record 1.6 million barrels were exported to foreign countries. This is a 33 percent increase over shipments in 2007. This surge in exports is a direct contradiction to the pleas of the U.S. oil industry and the Bush administration for Congress to open more offshore waters and Alaska's Arctic National Wildlife Refuge to drilling.

President Bush said, "We can help alleviate short-ages by drilling for oil and gas in our own country."

My response to that is why not keep what we are currently drilling here at home for our own citizens and along with that, why not take some of the billions in profits from Exxon, Chevron and other U.S. oil companies and began serious investments into clean and green alternative energy.

Of course, Bill Holbrook, the spokes-man for the National Petrochemicals and Refiners Association blames the exports on "participating in global markets." This sounds very much like drill money for the U.S. oil industry and we will all just have to get used to it.

On the other hand, Jim Presswood, energy lobbyist for the Natural Resources Defense Council, said, "It doesn't look good to say: 'We need more oil.' But then export the refined products that you're getting."

We need a completely different direction in our country. Energy independence will come at great cost, but America has proven in the past that its people are willing to roll up their sleeves and tackle the big challenges. While we will remain dependent on foreign oil for many, many years to come, increasing global warming and destroying pristine

areas of our country doesn't seem to me to be a very smart solution to reducing that dependence.

Solar, wind, biodiesel and better automobile technology will pay huge dividends for our children and their children, not to mention the planet they will inhabit. Most of the arguments I hear from the drill, drill, drill crowd lack imagination and intelligence in solving a problem that was created by the Republican insistence that the Friedman model of economics and disaster capitalism are the only choices. I beg to differ.

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Billy Knight is a local businessman and former Democratic County chairman.