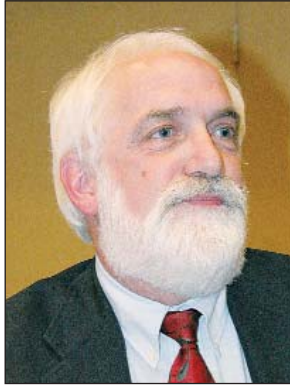


Useful climate change discussion requires civility

Senator David Wanzenried



Sen. David Wanzenried (D) Senate District 49, Missoula, serves as a member of the Senate's Natural Resources & Energy Committee and Chair of the bipartisan Environmental Quality Council.

Editor's Note:

As a service to readers RM asked two state senators for their views on climate change and potential legislation for the coming 2009 session. On this page, Missoula's Sen. Dave Wanzenried's interview is reported. Sen. Verdell Jackson of Kalispell preferred to submit his thoughts in an essay.

Getting consensus in Montana about climate change won't be easy, but Sen. Dave Wanzenried of Missoula is confident that the state has a place and an attitude to start. The place would be the 54 recommendations of Gov. Brian Schweitzer's Climate Change Advisory Committee.

And the attitude would be one of civility, he says.

First, the 54 recommendations. They're in the Montana Climate Change Action Plan, which has been handed to a bipartisan group called the Environmental Quality Council for prioritizing and possible legislative action.

"We managed to narrow the list of recommendations in the report from 54 to 15," Wanzenried said. "Those 15 form a general foundation of what the state will do to address climate change."

Wanzenried acknowledges broad disagreement on climate change. Besides those who believe climate change should be addressed, he said, "Some members would argue there is no climate change. Others argue that, if there is, it is not caused by humans. A third segment argues that if there is climate change and it is caused by humans, it shouldn't be up to the state to do anything about it. It's true that our impact is very small in national and international impact with regard to CO2 emissions especially."

Recommendations of the governor's council ran the gamut from conservation to the capture and storage of CO2 emissions, to reducing the levels to 1990 levels.

Wanzenried's council settled on what he calls the "low hanging fruit," mainly

conservation measures and actions that could also be taken by state administrators without legislation.

The 15 issues include, programs to promote local food and fiber, solid waste recovery, recycling, industrial energy audits, education programs, efficient state fleet vehicles and reforestation. The full list can be found online at: http://leg.mt.gov/css/lepo/2007_2008/environmental_quality_council/climate/recs/climate/recs.asp

A council meeting in May will discuss draft bills for the coming session. Then comes a public comment period. At a September meeting, the EQC will decide which issues will go forward, including enlarging or cutting the list further, he said.

One comment about the advisory council's report is the wonkish, or technical, nature of its language. "We pride ourselves on being a citizen legislature, so we had to wade through it, too. People who have questions need to ask until they get answers. The most important point is that we have the chance to look at the science as is it right now. Some say there's plenty of signs to point to mankind as the cause of global warming."

Wanzenried approaches the topic realistically. "It isn't as if Montana can solve climate change by itself, but nobody argues that conservation isn't a good idea. We have finite resources in oil and coal. By conserving those resources we leave them for future generations. My concern is that if we do nothing, and we're wrong, people would say, 'What were they thinking?'"

He says he has looked into

the issue enough to say there is a relationship between the environment and man's influence on climate change. "I believe we can make a down payment on stabilizing CO2 without damaging the economy. We do need to act on the best info available."

Now, about that attitude. Wanzenried says he thinks legislators can conduct a dialogue to iron out differences. "How can people react in a more civil way and find common ground?" he asks rhetorically.

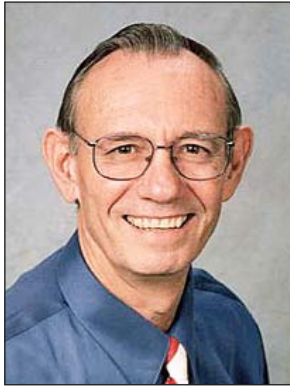
"My grandparents taught me that the way to get things done is to sit down and listen to others, especially those who disagree with me. Civility is lacking, not only in policy but in all interactions. We need to find ways to listen and find common ground on these tough and controversial issues."

His confidence that it can be done comes from legislative experiences in past sessions. "I'm amazed at how much people agree if they just listen to each other. I respect those who don't believe as I do, but I want them to respect my point of view, too. We tend to find we have more in common if we just listen to each other."

He views climate change as workable in Montana. "At the state-legislature level, we don't worry about foreign policy and defense issues. We can isolate issues like conservation at our level. Shouldn't we as consumers at least purchase vehicles that are fuel efficient?"

Future electricity demand requires a realistic energy plan

Senator Verdell Jackson



Sen. Verdell Jackson (R), Senate District 5, Kalispell, sits on the bipartisan Environmental Quality Council in addition to his other committee assignment on Business, Labor & Economic Affairs.

Hydro and coal power have supplied Montana with the reliable and affordable electricity that has been the mainstay of our economy. Consider the impact of doubling or tripling the cost of electricity.

Montana's electric co-ops have received word that they will not get cost-based power from Bonneville Power Administration to meet increases in load. The National Rural Electric Cooperative Association predicts that demand will increase 40 percent by the year 2030. It is also likely that the present allocations of hydro will decrease as the West Coast demands more power. An emphasis on conservation and renewables may help in the short run, but will eventually fall short.

Although nuclear and hydro rank first and second in cost effectiveness, coal plants are a close third. Coal power appears to be the most viable option for supplying cheap reliable base-load electrical power for Montana because of the plentiful coal supply. The power plant in Colstrip is one of the cleanest U.S. plants with emissions far below all of the EPA minimums on pollution. Carbon sequestration should not be considered until there is verifiable scientific evidence carbon dioxide is causing global warming and more research is done on the cost and long-term consequences of pumping it underground.

It makes sense to produce electricity with coal, because the plants are becoming cleaner with each new step in technology. Also, pollution can be eliminated at the point of use with electricity.

Electricity is easy to control, clean, safe and cheap to install. If electricity cost less, people would not use wood, coal, oil or natural gas for energy. Besides supplying plentiful, cheap electricity for Montana families and a backup for renewables, export of electricity would provide good paying jobs and funds for such needs as roads, schools and health care.

The cost of wind- and solar-generated electricity is two to four times the average price of power. It costs about one-third more to construct a wind farm than a coal plant. Without a cheap, reliable base load of electricity, wind and renewables cannot be efficiently integrated into the grid, and wind turbines generate only 20 to 35 percent of the time. A single 555-megawatt gas-fired power plant in California generates more electricity in a year than do all 13,000 of that state's wind turbines. The gas-fired plant sits on 15 acres while the 300-foot-tall windmills impact over 100,000 acres in providing more expensive yet intermittent energy. If new technology someday makes wind power obsolete, the cleanup of these sites will be huge. There is about 100,000 cubic feet of concrete buried up to 30 feet deep for each tower; which is why there are hundreds of defunct towers in Alaska and Hawaii that have not been removed.

Ethanol and biodiesel compete with our food supply. Food prices are impacted when grains are used for fuel. However, cellulosic ethanol plants that use non food biomass such as raw sewage, sawdust and other waste car-

bon products can be very competitive, if built in tandem with a cheap source of electricity and waste heat from a coal or nuclear plant.

Like Montana, the federal government has no long-range plan to supply future electricity needs. The trend is to build natural gas power plants. Natural gas will continue to rise in price and, ironically, guarantee our dependence and security on Middle East sources.

New technology has made nuclear power safe and efficient. France is now energy independent using nuclear plants. Time is short. The supply of oil and gas cannot provide the electricity needed for a developing world. If the number of nuclear plants in the United States were doubled, the \$500 billion spent annually to import oil could be eliminated.

It appears that any energy plan must first be approved by environmentalists and activist judges. However, a lack of energy and self sufficiency threatens our national security, our economy and every family's standard of living. Without a cheap, reliable, local source of energy, our nation will cease to be a world leader, and our economy and financial system will collapse. Let us hope that we never have to use our federal and state emergency powers to overcome those who are preventing us from using our natural resources to become energy self-sufficient.