

# New Jersey Acts on Energy and Climate Change

In early 2006, a group of leaders from environment and industry, state and local government, and academia and think tanks, began a process to understand and reach agreement about the future of energy and climate policy in New Jersey. They organized public listening sessions, launched a computer modeling effort to explore scenarios for the future, and deliberated on energy targets for the state. On May 22, 2007, this group presented their findings to the public at a meeting in New Brunswick, NJ.

The auditorium was full at the Edward J. Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy, Rutgers University, where the event, organized by the New Jersey Sustainable State Institute (NJS-SI) took place. Interest in energy and climate issues had spiraled upward in response to the Iraq War, high fuel prices, electricity blackouts, Al Gore's *An Inconvenient Truth*, and the release in early 2007 of the latest findings of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. By late May there was a buzz, and the conference became a focal point for pent-up interest.

The convener of the conference, NJSSI, monitors indicators of the state's progress toward sustainability goals. This group also engages in public processes to establish targets for the various sustainability indicators, using this strategic planning framework to encourage discussion and forge policy consensus. Visit [www.njssi.org](http://www.njssi.org) for details.

An unusual aspect of this conference was its focus on state-level energy and climate policies. The lack of federal leadership on these issues within the U.S.A. has

opened a window of opportunity at the state level for policy entrepreneurs. California acted in 2005 with an executive order establishing greenhouse gas emission reduction targets, ratified in 2006 by the state legislature. New Jersey acted in 2007, helped along by the

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fact-finding, target-setting effort leading to this conference. The thoughtful discussions and careful analysis that played out during 2006 and early 2007 played a role in giving policymakers and stakeholders the confidence to act decisively. Thus, by February 2007, New Jersey's governor had penned an executive order setting two greenhouse gas targets: reduce emissions to 1990 levels by 2020, and reduce emissions to 80% below current levels by 2050. The governor saw a parade forming and placed himself at its head.

Thus, the May event ended up examining the plausibility of the New Jersey governor's targets rather than proposing initial targets. This was important because the state legislature was scheduled to ratify the targets in June 2007, and there were some skeptics.

The analysis presented at the conference yielded several important findings:

- The governor's 2020 greenhouse gas target is technically and economically feasible if aggressive policies are enacted soon.
- The 2050 greenhouse target seems less feasible assuming only incremental advances in current technologies, so a disruptive "Solution X" needs to be invented.
- There is not a large economic penalty for post-industrial New Jersey to pursue aggressive climate policies because energy is a small and shrinking part of the State's economy (assuming

energy expenditures don't exceed the current 8% of aggregate income).

- As a consumer state lacking indigenous resources, New Jersey depends on the outside world for almost all of its energy. The state is unlikely to produce even 10% of its energy indigenously over the next 30 years, in spite of a very aggressive renewable portfolio standard for the electric industry. Self-sufficiency will not be New Jersey's path to energy security.

At the conference, a panel of state legislators responded to the research findings. Both Democrats and Republicans expressed support for the greenhouse gas emissions reduction targets. They also discussed a variety of legislative initiatives already underway including bills to promote energy efficient building, gas sipper rebates for efficient cars (paid for by gas guzzler fees on inefficient cars), monitoring systems to track greenhouse gas emissions, and land use guidelines. None proposed to raise the state's gasoline tax, which is the lowest in the nation after Alaska and Wyoming.

Then a panel of stakeholders responded. A utility executive endorsed the targets and urged the audience to keep the nuclear option on the table (New Jersey's nuclear power plants are up for imminent re-licensing).

An environmental advocate also endorsed the targets but argued that efficiency and renewables were all that was needed to achieve the emissions reductions. A real estate developer endorsed the targets too, and somewhat surprisingly he demanded much more stringent land use planning and heavier gasoline taxation. Follow up questions from the audience focused similarly on means, not ends.

The outcome of this conference suggests that in New Jersey, the debate about whether to address global warming is over. Politicians, stakeholders, and many members of the public support aggressive emissions reduction targets. In confirmation, the legislature subsequently ratified New Jersey's targets in a nearly unanimous vote on June 22, 2007. Debate is now shifting to how to meet those targets.

The U.S. federal system of government has a fearsome inertia that can only be overcome when enough states push from below and thereby encourage national leaders to do the right thing. Another state has now acted. Eventually, the United States will act.

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## NEWS

# IEEE Society on Social Implications of Technology Presents First Distinguished Service Award

The IEEE Society on Social Implications of Technology (SSIT) presented its first Distinguished Service Award to Professor Joseph R. Herkert at its annual conference, the International Symposium on Technology and Society (ISTAS) 2007 on June 1, 2007, in Las Vegas, NV. The award was established in 2006, SSIT's 25th anniversary year, and recognizes distinguished service to the Society over the years. Herkert, who will be taking a position at Arizona State University in Mesa, AZ., in September 2007, has been active in the Society since 1989. He is currently editor of SSIT's award-winning journal, *Technology & Society Magazine*.

The award citation reads "In recognition of his years of dedicated service to the Society as Society president, Editor of *Technology & Society Magazine*, conference organizer and presenter, speaker, and mentor."



IEEE-SSIT Vice President and Awards Chair Janet Rochester presents SSIT's first Distinguished Service Award to Joe Herkert.