



An Initiative of the Breakthrough Institute

A NATIONAL ENERGY EDUCATION ACT

A Policy Proposal to the Obama Campaign

July 30, 2008

Advancing a National Energy Education Act as a part of his campaign platform will allow Senator Obama to maximize political capital from several key constituencies and position himself as a visionary leader in the areas of education, energy, and economic competitiveness.

Strategic Outcomes:

Support from numerous constituencies representing a broad base of the American public, including:

- Voters concerned with:
 - Energy security and independence
 - American competitiveness and economic growth
 - Pressing environmental issues including climate change
 - Education and investment in youth
- Blue-collar workers and citizens calling for green jobs
- Clean technology and green venture capital industries
- Parents, students, teachers and other advocates calling for improved education
- Leaders of American universities and the academic community

A powerful public image of:

- Dedication to American economic competitiveness and growth
- Investment in improved education and energy workforce training
- A visionary commitment to the next generation of Americans
- A change from the Bush era of educational neglect and incompetence

Policy Recommendations for a National Energy Education Act:

1. Improve quality and access to education in energy-related fields, such as science, mathematics, engineering, technology and policy at universities and colleges. This would include:
 - Expanding funding for energy research via new research grants and graduate fellowships
 - Providing financial aid and loan forgiveness for students entering energy-related fields
 - Expanded energy-related service learning and work-study opportunities
 - New multidisciplinary curricula focused on the energy challenge
2. Create and support innovative energy research centers in national laboratories and university campuses
3. Provide improved training and resources for energy-related educators at the K-12 and collegiate levels
4. Build partnerships between the private sector, educational institutions, and community organizations to develop and fund new workforce training programs in clean energy industries
5. Support technology commercialization via “innovation pipelines,” to move new products out of research labs and into private sector ventures