

# Protecting Vermont

Len Britton's Environment and Energy Policy Initiatives



*“As a United States Senator, I will do everything possible to promote the Vermont experience everywhere I go. My responsibilities to Vermont’s environment won’t stop there. On the following pages, I have highlighted two environmental initiatives I will tackle in my first years as one of Vermont’s U.S. Senators.”*

*– Len Britton*

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# Lake Champlain

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Lake Champlain is Vermont's crown jewel, serving as a key economic and recreational area for Vermont. Thousands of tourists venture to Vermont every year to enjoy Lake Champlain, Vermont's beautiful scenery, and the countless outdoor activities such as hunting, fishing, as well as the ski resorts scattered across the state.

In a 2007 study, the Vermont Department of Tourism and Marketing released a report highlighting the mean expenditures of tourists visiting Vermont. The study found that hunters, fishermen, and water recreation enthusiasts provided the greatest tax revenue to the state of Vermont. It is in our economic interest that we promote the opportunities our natural resources offer to outdoor enthusiasts.

The Lake also plays host to many great events ranging from the Lake Champlain International fishing derby to the Dragon Boat races in Burlington. These events draw tourists from all over the country.

Unfortunately, Lake Champlain and several of Vermont's water areas face environmental threats ranging from invasive species, like sea lampreys, to excessive amounts of phosphorus spurring blue-green algae bloom growth all over the lake. Washington's response to Lake Champlain's troubles has been to shove earmarks into various pieces of legislation. Although it's good that our Congressional delegation is working to fund projects that protect Lake Champlain, doing so through year-to-year earmarks in order to be annually recognized for their "hard work" is not sufficient.

**"I do not believe Patrick Leahy has done enough for Lake Champlain."**

*-Len Britton*

Funding the clean-up of Lake Champlain should not be a political ploy. I do not believe Patrick Leahy has done enough for Lake Champlain and Vermont's environment. Sporadic spending will not solve the crisis that Lake Champlain faces. A comprehensive plan that is fully funded is needed; nothing less. Thirty six years in office filled with countless spending efforts by Pat Leahy have barely mitigated the threats the Lake continues to face.

All efforts should not rest solely on the shoulders of Vermont either. We often overlook that the state of New York also has a vested interest in the Lake. I look forward to working with New York's U.S. Senate delegation in protecting our mutual interests Lake Champlain.

As a U.S. Senator, I would rigorously pursue legislation that would make Lake Champlain and Vermont a test case for comprehensive environmental legislation designed to renovate environmental practices and rebuilding a crippling infrastructure. This should include more than just a few million dollars to combat the devastating lamprey infestation or \$40,000 to refurbish a meeting room at the "Echo-Leahy Center" on Burlington's waterfront.

## I would fight to fully fund efforts in the following areas:

- ✓ Work with Vermont's farmers to control pollutions running off their farms. Farms are not the only reason for high phosphorus levels leaking into rivers and streams across the street. This effort should be in partnership with the Chamber of Commerce and farming coalitions so that the most efficient and cost effective plan is put in place for Vermont's farmers.
- ✓ Educate Vermont students on the economic and recreational value of Lake Champlain
- ✓ Invest in Vermont's water infrastructure. Across the country, water treatment facilities and water pipes flowing throughout cities and towns are aging beyond their intended life span. We are one broken pipe away from a crisis beyond what Vermont towns can handle. It is imperative that our Government provide clean and safe water.
- ✓ Fully fund lamprey control measures to eliminate the invasive species from Lake Champlain and surrounding waterways so it is once again safe to fish and swim in those areas.
- ✓ Combat the resurgence of blue-green algae blooms across Lake Champlain.
- ✓ Work with local businesses and non-profits in establishing an "Adopt a Shore" program similar to the "Adopt a Highway" initiative. The focus would be providing volunteer and community based resources to keeping the environment as clean as possible.

# Energy and Our Reliance on Fossil Fuels

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As the “Lieberman-Warner Cap and Trade” bill falls off of the agenda in Washington, America once again lacks a clear plan to wean the country off of fossil fuels and transition to cleaner energy. This is unacceptable.

Our government officials constantly talk about developing an energy policy, yet with all the talk we have yet to develop a comprehensive plan. Current “energy policy” is nothing more than a hodge-podge of legislative pet projects. We continue to rely heavily on fossil fuels, special interests have lobbied legislators into subsidizing inefficient fuels that show no promise for securing energy independence, and all the while we have turned our backs on some of the cheapest and most efficient forms of energy production.

From the fuel crisis of 1973 to the recent oil spill in the Gulf, Americans are continually reminded that dependency on oil is leading us down a path of economic and environmental peril. The current oil crisis in the Gulf is a result of restrictions placed on the oil industry that have forced them to drill in riskier areas. Moreover, adequate government oversight has been nonexistent. Our dependency on oil needs to stop.



*“I do believe that Vermont Yankee and many other nuclear facilities across the nation need to be decommissioned...”*

I do believe that Vermont Yankee and many other nuclear facilities across the nation need to be decommissioned due to their age and pending high-cost to upkeep. Working with the “Energy and Natural Resource Committee” and the “Commerce, Science, and Transportation Committee,” I will work towards creating a sunset date on the utilization of oil. Setting a date for the end of oil consumption should help to

promote the development of alternative fuels that will eliminate our dangerous dependency on nations that are hostile to our interests.

This sunset date will probably not fall within my lifetime, but with the proper public education and time table (such as the five year promotion for when we migrated from analog to digital cable) the process can be effective and at little cost to the American public. We need to start moving into that direction immediately.

Constraints placed on other viable forms of energy production, such as nuclear power, have ensured our heavy reliance on coal and gas for energy production. The stigma attached to nuclear power plants has prevented our country from building a single nuclear facility in three decades. Meanwhile, our existing facilities, such as Vermont Yankee, are becoming increasingly unstable with no replacement option available.

I do believe that Vermont Yankee and many other nuclear facilities across the nation need to be decommissioned due to their age and pending high-cost to upkeep. However, before that is done we should have modern nuclear plants constructed and online, ready to produce the base-load for our grid. I agree with President Barack Obama's call for the construction of nuclear power plants across the country during his recent State of the Union address. These plants will be built utilizing modern technologies that will ensure our nuclear plants are efficient, safe, and able to produce power at rates not witnessed in our aging plants.

We must also invest in programs such as wind and solar power. Though they will not provide the necessary load to Vermont and America, they can provide a supplement that will help keep energy costs low while also moving us off of environmentally harmful resources such as coal and natural gas.

As Vermont's next U.S. Senator, I will fight to have one of the many new nuclear power plants President Obama has proposed built in Vernon before the shutdown of Vermont Yankee. This will ensure Vermont produces its own base-load at an affordable price to Vermonters statewide while maintaining the employment of hundreds of people in the town of Vernon.

In addition to building new nuclear plants, we also need to develop a comprehensive nuclear recycling and storage program. Current technologies exist in countries such as France, where nuclear power is their primary source of energy, that provide for greater output of nuclear fuel rods as well as safe disposal. I look forward to learning more about the energy infrastructure of France, and how their safety protocols and regulation have prevented a single nuclear disaster from occurring in their country.

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i A "National Survey of the Vermont Visitor" found that the mean expenditure for fishers and/or hunters was \$2,096 and Vermont tourists partaking in water recreation spent on average \$1,674.  
ii Senator Bernie Sanders is a member of the Energy and Natural Resources Committee.