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**Op-ed re: energy initiative**

## **Time is now for energy independence**

### ***Pickens fighting for action, Texas well positioned as energy pacesetter***

T. Boone Pickens is a man of conviction, and the breadth and depth of his career in the energy industry is staggering. So, when Pickens says we've got an energy crisis on our hands, it's time to take notice. His Pickens Plan aims to address America's energy challenges by delivering an actionable plan toward cleaner, cheaper, more abundant domestic energy sources.

In doing so, he has stepped forward with his own reputation, money and resources to lead America toward true energy independence. For Mr. Pickens and his Pickens Plan army, it's time for action rather than mere rhetoric.

If we're truly going to set our nation free from the stranglehold of foreign oil, we've got to do more than talk about it. What Pickens proposes is comprehensive action aimed at assuring America's energy independence by harnessing power sources we have right here in our own backyard.

Pickens is the quintessential oil and gas man with Texas-sized fame and fortune. Yet, it's that pacesetter and entrepreneurial spirit that is guiding him to take the sort of bold action on energy reform that's so needed in our country. And, he's putting his money and his time into not only advocating for change on a grand scale but also making much needed direct economic investments to build the world's largest wind energy center.

Like Pickens, West Texas is an energy region and an action region. It's that can-do spirit that has made West Texas what it is today.

West Texas is doing what we do best, leading by example. We're in the midst of the most intensive wind energy development in the world while maintaining our prominence as a leader in domestic oil and natural gas production, too.

Energy is our lifeblood, but we all must recognize that we can't make it on either oil alone or wind alone. The wisdom of the Pickens Plan is that we use each of these

American energy resources to its best advantage. Only by wisely using each domestic fuel source in the spectrum can we achieve sustainable American energy independence.

Be it the hundreds of nuclear energy workers in the region or the communities vying to host the next round of state-of-the-art nuclear energy facilities, Texas energy is more than oil. Our region and our state are competing for the cleanest coal-fired power plants in the world and my hometown of Sweetwater will play host to the cutting-edge carbon sequestration plant by 2014.

Solar and hydrogen technology are taking off here and across the U.S., as are geothermal energy and biofuels. The name of the game is diversification, and our central objective should be to encourage the continued growth of these cleaner, cheaper domestic energy sources.

Not only does the vision of the Pickens Plan deliver on the promise of energy independence, but it also spurs economic growth with good paying jobs in these emerging energy sectors. The jobs tied to the wind energy industry alone touch every corner of our state and nation—from communities where the wind blows the strongest to our larger cities and ports where the wind turbines and technology are built and shipped.

Let's hope that Sen. Barack Obama, Sen. John McCain and our leaders in Washington are not only listening but are spurred to measurable, memorable and effective action. Pickens' energy plan will hopefully move our leaders to action, ensuring our energy independence, strengthening our national security and securing our environmental future by engaging that American can-do spirit.

*Greg Wortham is the executive director of the West Texas Wind Energy Consortium, a regional stakeholder alliance that represents more than a million people through its members over more than 100,000 square miles. Wortham is also the Mayor of Sweetwater, Texas – the Wind Energy Capital of the Americas.*