# 2ac elections

UNIQUENESS

IMPACT D

#### Gridlock inevitable with any election outcome

Curry, 9/11/12 - NBC News national affairs writer (Tom, NBC Politics, “Romney election could create new scenario for EPA and coal,” <http://nbcpolitics.nbcnews.com/_news/2012/09/11/13807749-romney-election-could-create-new-scenario-for-epa-and-coal?lite>)

Whether Mitt Romney or Barack Obama wins the presidential election, a congressional impasse in 2013 seems likely. That’s because under most conceivable election scenarios – with Romney or Obama in the White House, and with either Democrats maintaining their Senate majority, or the Republicans taking it – the minority party could use the filibuster threat to block proposals it opposed.

#### Jobs report will have a bigger effect than the plan

**Reich, 10/1**/12 - Chancellor’s Professor of Public Policy at the Goldman School of Public Policy at the University of California at Berkeley (Robert, “Bigger than the debates? Friday’s jobs report” Salon,

<http://www.salon.com/2012/10/01/bigger_than_the_debates_fridays_jobs_report/>

The biggest election news this week won’t be who wins the presidential debate Wednesday night. It will be how many new jobs were created in September, announced Friday morning by the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Rarely in the history has the monthly employment carried so much political significance. If the payroll survey is significantly more than 96,000 –- the number of new jobs created in August — President Obama can credibly claim the job situation is improving. If significantly fewer than 96,000, Mitt Romney has the more credible claim that the economy isn’t improving.

August’s household survey showed the overall rate of unemployment to be 8.1 percent in August – not bad, relative to previous rates – but that was mainly because so many Americans had stopped looking for work. (You’re deemed “unemployed” only if you don’t have a full-time job and you’re looking for work; if you’ve given up looking, you’re not counted.)

What happened to jobs in August or September – and what will happen in October (announced November 2, just days before Election Day) – have very little to do with what Obama did or didn’t do. Presidents have little to do with month-to-month changes in employment.

What’s more, the rest of the world isn’t cooperating: Much of Europe is in recession because it’s swallowed the “austerity” cool-aide. Japan is still a basket case. And China is slowing considerably.

In addition, Obama has had to grapple with a recalcitrant Republican congress, whose “number one goal,” according to Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell, hasn’t been to create more jobs but to make sure Obama doesn’t get a second term.

Still, evidence is accumulating that the U.S. economy has stalled. According to Commerce Department data released late last week, the economy grew at an annualized rate of only 1.3 percent between April and June. That’s down from 2 percent in the first quarter of the year. Consumer spending rose in August just .1 percent, after adjusting for inflation. Orders for durable goods (cars, TVs, other long-lasting manufactured products) dropped 13 percent, the biggest monthly drop in three years. And because incomes grew less than spending, the savings rate dropped to 3.7 percent — the lowest since April.

**econ outweighs the plan in swing states**

Pew 12. [Pew Research Center, “GOP Holds early turnout edge, but little enthusiasm for Romney” June 21 -- http://www.people-press.org/2012/06/21/section-2-assessing-obama-and-romneys-support/]

Economy Dominates Voter Concerns Economic conditions are at the forefront of most voters’ concerns. When asked to name the issue they would most like to hear the candidates talk about, 56% mention one of three economic topics: the economy broadly (42%), the job situation (13%) or the budget deficit (4%). Health care is the only other issue garnering more than one-in-ten mentions (18%). A separate close-ended question echoes these economic concerns. When offered six choices, a plurality of voters (35%) say that jobs will be the top issue in deciding their vote for president this year, followed by the budget deficit (23%) and health care (19%). Another 11% say Social Security will matter most to them, with relatively few citing immigration (5%) or gay marriage (4%) as the most important issue affecting their vote. Jobs top the list for both certain Obama supporters (37%) and swing voters (38%), while certain Romney supporters are about equally likely to say jobs (30%) as to say the budget deficit (33%). Health care is more frequently named by certain Obama voters (26%) than either certain Romney (14%) or swing voters (15%).

Christine Todd, former EPA administrator, CASEnergy co-chair, and Karen Avilla, Hispanic Elected Local Officials president, "Nuclear energy = green jobs, economic growth in Fla., beyond," Orlando Sentinel, 6-22-12, articles.orlandosentinel.com/2012-06-22/opinion/os-ed-nuclear-energy-florida-jobs-062212-20120621\_1\_nuclear-energy-green-jobs-hispanic-community, accessed 9-4-12, mss)

#### Eurozone action will outweigh the plan

**Weisenthal, 9/26**/12 - Prior to joining Business Insider in October 2008, Joe was a correspondent for paidContent.org, as well as the Opening Bell editor at Dealbreaker.com. He previously was a writer and analyst for Techdirt.com, and before that worked as an analyst for money management firm Prentiss Smith & Co (Joe, “We're Getting A Glimpse Of Barack Obama's Worst Nightmare” Business Insider, http://www.businessinsider.com/obamas-worst-nightmare-2012-9#ixzz289W0KygN)

This doesn't necessarily seem likely, but the latest turns and twists of the global economy open up a scenario whereby markets could get really ugly between now and the election.

Basically, we present a plausible scenario in which things get bad on two fronts. The scenario is based on developments over the last several days.

Here's how it could go:

First, Europe really stalls out.

Thanks to the political crisis in Spain, suddenly it's not clear if the ECB's powerful bond buying program will ever get off the ground.

Remember, the ECB has announced a plan to backstop government bonds, but it needs the countries to request aid and submit to outside fiscal supervision. Because of mass protests, and a burgeoning secession movement in Catalonia, Spanish PM Mariano Rajoy is very reluctant to ask for a bailout unless it's absolutely necessary. He'd like to delay the request as long as possible.

In addition, you have heightening squabbles over what will be done with Greece (raising the specter that it will leave the Eurozone). There are more and more reports about HUGE holds in the government's budget, and the various creditor parties are fighting about who will take the hit. The specter of Greece leaving the Eurozone is rising.

This could then start hitting markets in the US. Actually that already seems to be happening. The market's dropping. And now we no longer have an implied "put" from the Fed, since it's already blown its wad (or so it seems) with the announcement of open-ended QE.

Already, the market has been weak since QE3 was announced, and in particular, the oil & gas/basic materials stocks that people associate with reflation have been weak.

Those two sectors, which are supposed to rise on successful reflation, make up 2 out of 3 of the worst performing S&P sectors today.

This could be a nothing blip, but a series of weeks like this one (riots in Europe, which inevitably remind people about government debt) and markets in the US reacting badly could be the "October Surprise" that Romney needs to win.

#### No Romney traction – even if voters hate Obama’s energy policy they won’t shift to Romney

Lewis, 10/1/12 - senior contributor to The Daily Caller (Matt, The Daily Caller, “Mitt Romney’s struggle to win blue collar Ohio voters”

This sounds trivial, but it matters greatly — especially in places like Ohio.

The Atlantic’s Molly Ball is consistently a “must read,” and her latest column reinforces a point I’ve been making for a long time — that Mitt Romney is in danger of under-performing with working-class whites in key states like the Buckeye state. (Ball’s teaser says it all: “In Appalachian coal country, Romney is now viewed with nearly as much suspicion as Obama — and that may be the story of the 2012 election.”)

There is at least one substantive reason for these voters to be skeptical of Romney. While interviewing Ohio voters, Ball stumbled over an interesting blast from the past:

It turns out Romney, as governor of Massachusetts in 2003, held a press conference in front of a coal-fired power plant. “I will not create jobs or hold jobs that kill people,” he said, and then, gesturing at the facility behind him: “That plant, that plant kills people.” You can see the footage in an Obama campaign ad that’s been airing heavily here. It seems to have made an impression.

The notion that Romney would be worse for coal than Obama seems absurd. Still, Obama is using the line to effectively muddy the waters. All he really needs is for voters to conclude, “they’re both bad,” and Obama can consider that a victory. Ball sums it up thusly,

I heard it over and over again from Ohioans — the idea that Romney stands for the wealthy and not for them. Obama’s depiction of his rival as an out-of-touch rich guy, which has gotten no little assistance from Romney himself, has made a deep and effective impression with these self-consciously working-class voters.

#### Energy won’t switch votes

**Farnam, 12** (T.W. Washington Post, Energy ads flood TV in swing states, 6/27, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/energy-ads/2012/06/27/gJQAD5MR7V_story.html>)

Energy issues don’t spark much excitement among voters, ranking below health care, education and the federal budget deficit — not to mention jobs and the economy.

And yet those same voters are being flooded this year with campaign ads on energy policy. Particularly in presidential swing states, the airwaves are laden with messages boosting oil drilling and natural gas and hammering President Obama for his support of green energy. The Cleveland area alone has heard $2.7 million in energy-related ads.

The disconnect between what voters say they care about and what they’re seeing on TV lies in the money behind the ads, much of it coming from oil and gas interests. Those funders get the double benefit of attacking Obama at the same time they are promoting their industry.

Democrats also have spent millions on the subject, defending the president’s record and tying Republican candidate Mitt Romney to “Big Oil.”

Overall, more than $41 million, about one in four of the dollars spent on broadcast advertising in the presidential campaign, has gone to ads mentioning energy, more than a host of other subjects and just as much as health care, according to ad-tracking firm Kantar Media/Cmag.

In an election focused heavily on jobs and the economy, all of this attention to energy seems a bit off topic. But the stakes are high for energy producers and environmentalists, who are squared off over how much the government should regulate the industry. And attention has been heightened by a recent boom in production using new technologies such as fracking and horizontal drilling, as well as a spike in gas prices this spring just as the general election got underway.

When asked whether energy is important, more than half of voters say yes, according to recent polls. But asked to rank their top issues, fewer than 1 percent mention energy.

#### Too late to change the election- ideology

Helling ’12 (DAVE HELLING, McClatchy Newspapers Miami Herald 7-22-12 "Is the race for president already over?"

But **a growing number** of **political scientists and campaign consultants** - backed by the **latest polling data** - think the daily campaign back-and-forth **is having no significant effect on voters.** Most Americans have **locked in** their presidential decisions, polls released Thursday suggested, and the already small number of persuadable voters **shrinks by the hour**. Put another way: America could vote for president next week, and the outcome would probably be the same as it will be in November. "That's accurate, barring some really big, big event or change in the political environment," said Alan Abramowitz, a political science professor at Emory University in Atlanta, who has studied presidential voting patterns. Kenneth Warren, a political science professor at St. Louis University, agreed. "Most people have decided who they're going to vote for early on," he said. Recent polls show those who have decided are split almost evenly between Obama and Romney. In a CBS/New York Times poll, Romney led by 1 point. In a Fox News poll, he trailed Obama by 4 points. A National Public Radio poll found Obama leading by 2 points. A Gallup tracking poll over the same time period showed the race dead even. The average of polls puts the Obama advantage at 1.2 percent, according to Real Clear Politics, a political aggregation website. The incumbent has led Romney in that average by a one- to two-point margin since last October. Political scientists and consultants said there were several reasons for early presidential decision-making. In an Internet-cable-TV age, **voters are pounded with political messages daily, helping them make up their minds far in advance** of the election. An incumbent in the race makes at least one of the candidates a known quantity. And American **voters are deeply divided, further cementing their choices.**

#### Undecided/swing votes dont pay attention

Ezra Klein http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2012-09-26/why-undecided-voters-won-t-be-deciding-this-election.html 9-26-12

Even though the ad is an exaggeration, it’s not an outright lie. This election will probably be decided by a tiny fraction of the electorate in eight or nine states. The undecided voters in those states are popularly portrayed as people who just can’t make up their minds. But that’s not quite right. They aren’t so much “undecided” as uninterested and, frankly, uninformed; in political-science parlance -- and SNL ads -- they are “low information” voters. It’s worth stopping here to clarify something: “uninformed” does not mean “dumb.” We’re all uninformed about certain topics. You wouldn’t believe how little I know about, say, baseball. I’m vaguely aware that it happens, and that it culminates in a World Series, but I can’t tell you who won last year, or who’s in contention this year. Baseball just isn’t something I pay attention to. Lynn Vavreck, a political scientist at the University of California at Los Angeles, says that uninformed voters have roughly the same relationship to politics that I have to baseball. “They are lower on political information, for sure. That’s a function of being not that interested and not paying attention,” she said. “It’s not that they can’t comprehend the information, or that they’re at a balancing point and can’t decide. They’re just not dialed in. They’re not getting all the information you or I are getting.” Vavreck asked thousands of voters -- both decided and undecided -- a battery of basic, multiple-choice questions about who’s who in politics. The questions were designed to be easy. You didn’t have to know that John Boehner is Speaker of the House. You just had to know he is a congressman rather than a judge or the vice president. According to Vavreck’s polling, only 35 percent of undecided voters could identify Boehner’s job as “congressman.” Only 69 percent could say that Joe Biden is the vice president rather than, say, a representative. Only 17 percent can identify Chief Justice John Roberts as a judge. Decided voters have an easier time rattling off the job titles of Boehner and Biden, as well as those of Harry Reid, Eric Cantor, Mitch McConnell and Nancy Pelosi. (Interestingly, they struggle more than undecideds to identify Roberts.) That’s likely because decided voters are paying more attention to the election. About 43 percent of decided voters say they’re following the presidential election “very closely.” Only 12 percent of undecided voters say the same. Recognizing that undecided voters are mostly uninterested voters helps to clarify the trajectory of the presidential campaign. In their book “The Timeline of Presidential Elections,” Robert Erikson and Christopher Wlezien show that voter preferences tend to be very stable in the fall, but that campaign observers -- the authors analyze people betting money in online political prediction markets -- tend to assume those preferences are far more volatile. Psychological Projection The misjudgment makes sense as an act of psychological projection. To people personally invested in politics, the homestretch of the campaign appears loaded with the kind of political information that could change voter opinions. There are debates, a flood of ads, inevitable gaffes, the crush of election news -- maybe even an October surprise or two. But undecided voters are precisely those least likely to tune in to the debates, which helps explain why debates typically have little effect on elections. They’re the least likely to care about a gaffe -- or even to know when one has occurred. They’re more likely to throw out political mail and tune out political ads. If they live in a swing state, they’ve already been buffeted by -- and proved immune to -- months of commercials and phone messages. Vavreck has been tracking a group of 44,000 voters since December 2011. When she started, 94 percent were already leaning toward a candidate. Of the 6 percent who were truly undecided, 33 percent now say they’re going with Mitt Romney and 37 percent with President Barack Obama. The ranks of the original undecided voters were partially replenished by voters who had expressed a preference in 2011 but have since grown uncertain. Of the new undecideds, slightly more were Romney supporters in 2011 than were Obama supporters, but the total numbers are small. There’s little reason to believe that undecided voters in this campaign will break sharply toward one candidate. The votes of the undecideds seem to be roughly evenly split, and if any big news happens between now and the election, they’re likely to be the last to know about it, and the least interested in following up on it. If Obama is going to turn this into a rout, or if Romney is to salvage a win, it will probably require changing minds that are already made up, or increasing (or suppressing) turnout among base voters. In other words, don’t expect the votes of the mythical undecideds to actually be decisive. It’s likely to be the decided who will, well, decide. (Ezra Klein is a Bloomberg View columnist. The opinions expressed are his own.)

#### Jobs and gas prices ensure public support---SMRs aren’t an election issue but if they were, links non U

Johnson 12 John, Nuclear Energy Insider, April 25, "US Campaign Trail: is nuclear in the equation?", analysis.nuclearenergyinsider.com/new-build/us-campaign-trail-nuclear-equation

In the next Presidential election, American voters will be voting with their pockets. We look at how the campaign so far has revealed which candidate will support nuclear R&D, nuclear new-build projects and ultimately preserve and create nuclear sector jobs. As the U.S. Presidential election draws closer, Americans are most concerned about job creation and how the candidates plan to boost the U.S. economy. Alternative energy policies have received a fair amount of publicity from the Obama administration, although nuclear power specifically is rarely mentioned on the campaign trial, primarily due to perceived safety questions. Just the same, the Obama Administration is considered a nuclear supporter, having made several moves to help jumpstart America’s nuclear energy industry. Obama plugged nuclear power during his first State Of The Union speech several years ago, and has generally been upbeat about the energy source’s future in the U.S. The Campaign Obama, a Democrat, will face Mitt Romney in the November election. Romney is expected to be named the official Republican nominee in August. While Romney has not taken a stance on nuclear energy during his campaign, the Obama administration has made significant investments in the sector, including a $450m budget request in March intended to advance the development of American-made small modular reactors (SMRs). Congress still needs to approve the authorization for funding. The SMRs are expected to be ready for commercial use within 10 years, and are intended for small electric grids and for locations that cannot support large reactors, offering utilities the flexibility to scale production as demand changes. “The Obama Administration and the Energy Department are committed to an all-of-the-above energy strategy that develops every source of American energy, including nuclear power, and strengthens our competitive edge in the global clean energy race,” U.S. Energy Secretary Steven Chu said when the program was announced. “Through the funding for small modular nuclear reactors, the Energy Department and private industry are working to position America as the leader in advanced nuclear energy technology and manufacturing.” John Keeley, manager of media relations for the Nuclear Energy Institute, said that the Obama administration has done what it can to support the deployment on new build-outs in the United States to build out nuclear, as well as supporting research and development efforts, such as those in the small reactor space. Research support In addition, the U.S. has invested $170 million in research grants at more than 70 universities, supporting research and development into a full spectrum of technologies, from advanced reactor concepts to enhanced safety design. “The President was explicit in his State Of The Union speech about the virtues of nuclear as a technology and its role in clean air generation,” said Keeley. “And he has been supportive of developing more nuclear plants in this country. Those initiatives have to be identified as significant evidence of support for the nuclear sector.” There are currently 104 nuclear power reactors operating in the U.S. in 31 states, operated by 30 different utilities. There are four new nuclear reactors being built in the U.S., including two in George at total expected cost of $14bn. In another sign of the U.S support for the industry, the federal government provided utility company Southern with an $8.3bn loan guarantee for the Vogtle Units 3 and 4, the first new nuclear plants to be built in the U.S. in the last 30 years. They are expected to be operational in 2016 and 2017. The U.S. Energy Department has also supported the Vogtle project and the development of the next generation of nuclear reactors by providing more than $200m through a cost-share agreement to support the licensing reviews for the Westinghouse AP1000 reactor design certification. In addition to the Vogtle plants, SCANA, a subsidiary of South Carolina Electric & Gas Co. plans to add two reactors to its nuclear power plant near Jenkinsville, S.C., by 2016 and 2019. “There is certainly political consensus in support of clean generation, and large scale cultural consensus as well,” said Keeley. Political benefits of nuclear support As gas prices in the U.S. continue to soar, it’s possible that the tide will turn more in favor of nuclear and other clean energy sources, especially as electric cars take a stronger foothold. In addition, the job creation benefits from nuclear could work their way into the political landscape as well. The two new Vogtle nuclear plants are expected to create approximately 5,000 on-site jobs during the peak of construction, with 800 high paying jobs remaining over the life of the plant.

#### Nuclear power doesn’t swing the election -- identical positions mean it won’t get drawn into the debate.

**Wood, 9-13-12**

[Elisa, AOL, “What Obama and Romney Don't Say About Energy,” http://energy.aol.com/2012/09/13/what-obama-and-romney-dont-say-about-energy/]

Fossil fuels and renewable energy have become touchy topics in this election, with challenger Mitt Romney painting President Barack Obama as too hard on the first and too fanciful about the second – and Obama saying Romney is out of touch with energy's future. But two other significant resources, nuclear power and energy efficiency, are evoking scant debate. What gives? Nuclear energy supplies about 20 percent of US electricity, and just 18 months ago dominated the news because of Japan's Fukushima Daiichi disaster – yet neither candidate has said much about it so far on the campaign trail. Romney mentioned nuclear power only seven times in his recently released white paper, while he brought up oil 150 times. Even wind power did better with 10 mentions. He pushes for less regulatory obstruction of new nuclear plants, but says the same about other forms of energy. Obama's campaign website highlights the grants made by his administration to 70 universities for research into nuclear reactor design and safety. But while it is easy to find his ideas on wind, solar, coal, natural gas and oil, it takes a few more clicks to get to nuclear energy. The Nuclear Energy Institute declined to discuss the candidates' positions pre-election. However, NEI's summer newsletter said that both "Obama and Romney support the use of nuclear energy and the development of new reactors."

# 2ac qer cp

#### 1. Counterplans that allow the possibility of doing the entire plan are a voting issue—otherwise it’s a no cost option

#### a. Kills affirmative ground—debate is rigged for the neg because they can choose an object of conditioning where the literature is on their side—even if we can get offense it relies on us reading new offense in the 2AC that gives them a 13 minute block to answer vs a 5 minute 1AR.

#### b. Anti-educational—consult counterplans give negatives an incentive to never do any work on the topic because they can always just change the process of the plan and claim arbitrary advantages—this prevents an in-depth examination of the literature.

#### 2. Perm: do the counterplan—it does the aff but changes implied functions of fiat that are NOT MANDATES of the plan. This isn’t a T debate and letting them determine what the plan does makes debate impossible since they’ll define it for maximum cp competition. Counterplans must be textually AND functionally competitive as it relates to the mandate of the plan. Resolved just means the topic committee voted for it and should means desirable. That’s dictionary.com

#### 3. Multiple conditional worlds are a voter:

#### A) 2ac theft—forces untenable offense in our hardest speech which makes strategic coverage impossible, prefer it cause it’s our last chance for offense and effects all other arguments. Especially when they can shift the focus or framework to make our offense irrelevant.

#### B) Decisionmaking—gives incentive to go for least covered position instead of research and develop args, also keeps them from understanding interactions between positions which undermines logic and perverts neg flex.

#### C) One conditional solves—lets us read germane offense and gives them enough liberty.

#### Perm do both—non-binding consultation solves, none of their cards specify prior binding.

#### Perm, do the counterplan in the world where \_\_\_\_\_ says yes—the counterplan fiats different actions depending on what the north says. This isn’t severance or intrinsic because it takes out the world where they say no—if they say no we have no perm

#### CP causes significant delays – means it can’t solve federal investments in energy leadership

PCAST, ‘10

[President’s Council of Advisors on Science and Technology, 11-10, “REPORT TO THE PRESIDENT ON

ACCELERATING THE PACE OF CHANGE IN ENERGY TECHNOLOGIES THROUGH AN INTEGRATED FEDERAL ENERGY POLICY,” http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/microsites/ostp/pcast-energy-tech-report.pdf]

Our most important recommendation is that the Administration establish a new process that can forge a more coordinated and robust Federal energy policy, a major piece of which is advancing energy innovation. Many Executive Branch agencies and departments must be engaged, with leadership from the Executive Office of the President. This is needed because “energy policy” is an amalgam, and often derivative, of policies for environment, competitiveness, security, finance, land use, and more. The President should establish a Quadrennial Energy Review (QER) process that will provide a multiyear roadmap that lays out an integrated view of short-, intermediate-, and long-term energy objectives; outlines legislative proposals to Congress; puts forward anticipated Executive actions coordinated across multiple agencies; and identifies resource requirements for the development and implementation of energy technologies. The Secretary of Energy should provide the Executive Secretariat for the QER. While the QER will be a product of the Administration, substantial input from the Congress, the energy industry, academia, NGOs, and the public at large will be essential to the process. A staged process should be implemented now so as to provide some elements of a QER during each of the next four years. We recommend that the Secretary of Energy prepare and implement a DOE-Quadrennial Energy Review, focused on energy technology innovation, as a component of the full interagency QER on a shorter timescale. The DOE-QER should include roadmaps for key energy technologies, an integrated plan for the involvement of the national laboratories in energy programs, portfolio assessments that lay out the optimal deployment of resources, identification, and projections of demonstration projects, and identification of funding needs for each technology. This QER will also be prepared with strong input from many sources inside and outside of the Administration including industry, business, state and local governments, non-governmental organizations, and consumers. A complete and integrated QER will take longer to mature. While a good start should be made in 2011, the full government-wide QER should be targeted for delivery in early 2015. PCAST encourages Congress to use the QER as a basis for a 4-year authorization process that guides annual appropriations. The Federal investment in energy research, development, demonstration, and deployment (RDD&D) is incommensurate with the objective of leadership in energy technology innovation. We recommend a substantial increase – to $16 billion per year – in Federal support for energy RDD&D. Given the difficulty of increasing appropriated funds to this level and the importance of “front-loading” the required investment to jump start innovation, we recommend an alternative approach. The President should engage the private sector and Congress so as to generate about $10 billion per year of additional RDD&D funding through new revenue streams. This increase will provide the U.S. with the potential to leapfrog to development and deployment of the advanced energy technologies that will define a robust 21st century energy system.

#### The CP won’t get implemented – still requires Congressional funding which means it gets rejected.

Barlas, ‘12

[Stephen, Financial Executive Magazine, Jan/Feb, “Does the U.S. Really Need An Energy Policy?” http://wa-dcwriter.blogspot.com/2012/01/does-us-really-need-energy-policy.html]

But it is highly unlikely that Obama's Blueprint will lead to a firmer footing for U.S. energy security than past Blueprints from other presidents, or, perhaps more importantly, whether a Blueprint is even necessary. Obama's Blueprint policy is a loosely knit set of policies which focus on producing more oil at home and reducing dependence on foreign oil by developing cleaner alternative fuels and greater efficiency. The Blueprint is not the result of any particular deep thinking or strategy. The President's Council of Advisors on Science and Technology (PCAST) called for the development of such a strategy in its November 2010 Report to the President on Accelerating the Pace of Change in Energy Technologies Through an Integrated Federal Energy Policy. The PCAST called for a Quadrennial Technology Review (QTR) as the first step in preparing a Quadrennial Energy Review. The DOE completed the QTR in November 2011, six months after Obama published his Blueprint. Steven E. Koonin, Under Secretary for Science, DOE, says the QTR is limited in scope and all the DOE felt it could get done given budget and time. "Technology development absent an understanding and shaping of policy and market context in which it gets deployed is not a productive exercise," he states. At this point there is no indication that the DOE will even undertake the much more important QER, much less complete it any time soon. The larger reality is that any energy independence plan proposed by any U.S. President--whether based on a QER or not--has as much a chance of coming to fruition as Washington's hapless Redskins have of getting into the Super Bowl. In any case, the rhetoric of President after President aside, maybe the U.S. doesn't even need an energy independence or energy security policy. The biggest energy input for industrial and commercial business users is natural gas. Natural gas prices are incredibly important, both because the fuel is used directly to run industrial processes, heat facilities and commercial buildings, and make products such as fertilizers, pharmaceuticals, plastics and other advanced materials. Thanks to the Shale Revolution, the Energy Information Administration (EIA) forecasts natural gas prices will stay low for the foreseeable future, rising to $4.66 m/BTU in 2015 and $5.05 m/BTU in 2020. That is good news for the owners of 15,000 to 17,000 industrial boilers in this country, most of which use natural gas (and many of those who still use coal are switching to natural gas). In addition, companies such as Dow Chemical are restarting operations at facilities idled during the recession, Bayer is in talks with companies interested in building new ethane crackers at its two industrial parks in West Virginia, and Chevron Phillips Chemical and LyondellBasell, are considering expanding operations in the U.S. Fracking has also had a much less remarked-upon effect on petroleum prices, which are important to businesses with transportation fleets. New oil sources are spurting from the Bakken and Eagles Ford shale plays. U.S. oil prices have fallen from $133.88 a barrel of Texas intermediate crude in June 2008 to $86.07 today. The EIA predicts oil prices will rise to $94.58/bbl in 2015 and $108.10/bbl in 2020. Beyond the flood of natural gas washing over them, U.S. companies are also benefitting from three decades of investments--most of which made without federal subsidies or support--into facility energy efficiency. Ralph Cavanagh, Co-Director, Energy Program, Natural Resources Defense Council, member of Electricity Advisory Board at the DOE, says the most important single solution for U.S. businesses worried about energy prices and energy access is aggressive energy efficiency. "Energy independence is the wrong issue," he says. "It is reducing the cost of energy services and improving energy security. "U.S. business has done a tremendous job in energy efficiency over the past three decades," he states. "It takes less than one-half of a unit of energy to create $1 of economic value than it did in 1973. Industry has done that by upgrading the efficiency of process equipment and upgrading lighting." Others may well argue that the U.S. needs, and has always needed, an energy policy, but one narrowly targeted. Kenneth B Medlock III, PhD, Deputy Director, Energy Forum, James A Baker III Institute for Public Policy at Rice University, notes that the DOE and the Gas Research Institute helped develop, with federal funding, the horizontal drilling (i.e. fracking) technology that Mitchell Energy (now a part of Devon Energy) pioneered. "Government ought to be focused on research & development," he states. He also is a supporter of loan guarantees to promote investment activity in frontier technologies, and argues that as long as there are more good bets than bad bets in that kind of portfolio, the funds committed in total are a good investment. But spectacular failures like Solyndra and other less publicized busts such as Beacon Power's Chapter 11 filing kill the prospect of any additional congressional funding for energy loan guarantees of any kind. That is true even when legislation has bi-partisan support, which is the case for the Energy Savings and Industrial Competitiveness Act of 2011 (S. 1000) which would, among other things, provide grants for a revolving loan program designed to develop energy-saving technologies for industrial and commercial use. The bill passed the Senate Energy Committee by a vote of 18-3 in July. However, the Congressional Budget Office has pegged the cost of the bill's provisions at $1.2 billion over five years. That is a serious barrier to passage. And in any case, even if it did pass, the bill would simply authorize funding. Congressional appropriations committees would have to approve the money as part of the DOE's budget, which would be highly unlikely, Solyndra aside, since similar programs authorized by the 2005 and 2007 energy bills are still begging for appropriations.

#### Certainty is essential – only effective method of catalyzing investment

**Trembath, 11** [2/4/11, [Nuclear Power and the Future of Post-Partisan Energy Policy](http://leadenergy.org/2011/02/the-nuclear-option-in-a-post-partisan-approach-on-energy/), Alex Trembath is a policy associate in the Energy and Climate Program at Breakthrough. He is the lead or co-author of several Breakthrough publications, including the 2012 report "Beyond Boom and Bust: Putting Clean Tech on a Path to Subsidy Independence" and "Where the Shale Gas Revolution Came From." Alex is a graduate of University of California at Berkeley, <http://leadenergy.org/2011/02/the-nuclear-option-in-a-post-partisan-approach-on-energy/>]

If there is one field of the energy sector for which certainty of political will and government policy is essential, it is nuclear power. High up front costs for the private industry, extreme regulatory oversight and public wariness necessitate a committed government partner for private firms investing in nuclear technology. In a new [report](http://www.thirdway.org/publications/370) on the potential for a “nuclear renaissance,” Third Way references the failed cap-and-trade bill, delaying tactics in the House vis-a-vis EPA regulations on CO₂, and the recent election results to emphasize the difficult current political environment for advancing new nuclear policy. The report, “The Future of Nuclear Energy,” makes the case for political certainty: “It is difficult for energy producers and users to estimate the relative price for nuclear-generated energy compared to fossil fuel alternatives (e.g. natural gas)–an essential consideration in making the major capital investment decision necessary for new energy production that will be in place for decades.” Are our politicians willing to match the level of certainty that the nuclear industry demands? Lacking a suitable price on carbon that may have been achieved by a cap-and-trade bill removes one primary policy instrument for making nuclear power more cost-competitive with fossil fuels. The impetus on Congress, therefore, will be to shift from demand-side “pull” energy policies (that increase demand for clean tech by raising the price of dirty energy) to [supply-side “push” policies](http://leadenergy.org/2010/09/supply-demand-energy-innovation/), or industrial and innovation policies. Fortunately, there are signals from political and thought leaders that a package of policies may emerge to incentivize alternative energy sources that include nuclear power. One place to start is the recently deceased American Power Act, addressed above, authored originally by Senators Kerry, Graham and Lieberman. Before its final and disappointing incarnation, the bill [included](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2010/05/12/american-power-act-photos_n_573643.html#s90041&title=undefined) provisions to increase loan guarantees for nuclear power plant construction in addition to other tax incentives. Loan guarantees are probably the most important method of government involvement in new plant construction, given the high capital costs of development. One wonders what the fate of the bill, or a less ambitious set of its provisions, would have been had Republican Senator Graham not abdicated and removed any hope of Republican co-sponsorship. But that was last year. The changing of the guard in Congress makes this a whole different game, and the once feasible support for nuclear technology on either side of the aisle must be reevaluated. A New York Times [piece](http://www.nytimes.com/2010/11/17/business/energy-environment/17NUCLEAR.html) in the aftermath of the elections forecast a difficult road ahead for nuclear energy policy, but did note Republican support for programs like a waste disposal site and loan guarantees. Republican support for nuclear energy has roots in the most significant recent energy legislation, the Energy Policy Act of 2005, which passed provisions for nuclear power with wide bipartisan support. Reaching out to Republicans on policies they have supported in the past should be a goal of Democrats who wish to form a foundational debate on moving the policy forward. There are also signals that key Republicans, notably [Lindsey Graham](http://washingtonindependent.com/99171/graham-circulating-clean-energy-standard) and [Richard Lugar](http://www.plattsenergyweektv.com/story.aspx?storyid=132784&catid=293), would throw their support behind a clean energy standard that includes nuclear and CCS. Republicans in Congress will find intellectual support from a group that AEL’s Teryn Norris coined [“innovation hawks,”](http://leadenergy.org/2011/01/the-rise-of-innovation-hawks/) among them Steven Hayward, David Brooks and George Will. Will has been [particularly outspoken](http://www.newsweek.com/2010/04/08/this-nuclear-option-is-nuclear.html) in support of nuclear energy, writing in 2010 that “it is a travesty that the nation that first harnessed nuclear energy has neglected it so long because fads about supposed ‘green energy’ and superstitions about nuclear power’s dangers.” The extreme reluctance of Republicans to cooperate with Democrats over the last two years is only the first step, as any legislation will have to overcome Democrats’ traditional opposition to nuclear energy. However, here again there is reason for optimism. Barbara Boxer and John Kerry bucked their party’s long-time aversion to nuclear in a precursor bill to APA, and Kerry continued working on the issue during 2010. Jeff Bingaman, in a speech earlier this week, reversed his position on the issue by calling for the inclusion of nuclear energy provisions in a clean energy standard. The Huffington Post [reports](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2011/02/01/sen-jeff-bingaman-backs-n_n_816864.html) that “the White House reached out to his committee [Senate Energy] to help develop the clean energy plan through legislation.” This development in itself potentially mitigates two of the largest obstacle standing in the way of progress on comprehensive energy legislation: lack of a bill, and lack of high profile sponsors. Democrats can also direct [Section 48C](http://leadenergy.org/2010/12/clean-energy-financing-first-steps-towards-post-partisan-effort/#more-3320) of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 towards nuclear technology, which provides a tax credit for companies that engage in clean tech manufacturing. Democrats should not give up on their policy goals simply because they no longer enjoy broad majorities in both Houses, and Republicans should not spend all their time holding symbolic repeal votes on the Obama Administration’s accomplishments. The lame-duck votes in December on “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell,” the tax cut deal and START indicate that at least a few Republicans are willing to work together with Democrats in a divided Congress, and that is precisely what nuclear energy needs moving forward. It will require an agressive push from the White House, and a concerted effort from both parties’ leadership, but the road for forging bipartisan legislation is not an impassable one. The politician with perhaps the single greatest leverage over the future of nuclear energy is President Obama, and his rhetoric matches the challenge posed by our aging and poisonous energy infrastructure. “This is our generation’s Sputnik moment,” announced Obama recently. Echoing the calls of presidents past, the President used his [State of the Union](http://www.slate.com/id/2281847/) podium to signal a newly invigorated industrialism in the United States. He advocated broadly for renewed investment in infrastructure, education, and technological innovation. And he did so in a room with many more members of the opposition party than at any point during the first half of his term. The eagerness of the President to combine left and right agendas can hopefully match the hyper-partisan bitterness that dominates our political culture, and nuclear power maybe one sector of our economy to benefit from his political leadership.