

Energy and Economics

Indiana Vision 2025 Plan Offers Priorities

By Charlee Beasor

Buzzing. Humming. Purring. Whirring. Pulsating. Energy: it's a silent symphony; softly vibrating around us every day. We don't really notice it at times, taking heed of its absence more than its presence. And while it seems simple – flip a light switch and the room is illuminated; dial a phone and have a conversation – it's multifaceted, with economic, political and environmental implications.

As part of the *Indiana Vision 2025* long-range economic development plan for the state, the Indiana Chamber of Commerce has identified six goals under the "Superior Infrastructure" driver. Half of the six are related to energy with the ultimate mission being to maintain Indiana's adequate, reliable and affordable energy supply.

Discussing those goals with BizVoice® and the state's overall energy picture are:

Our Participants:

Ron Christian – executive vice president of electricity and natural gas utility Vectren

Vince Griffin – vice president of energy and environmental affairs for the Indiana Chamber

Mark Maassel – president and CEO of the Northwest Indiana Forum regional economic development organization

Charlie Smith – president and CEO of oil exploration, production, refining and marketing company CountryMark

Diversified energy – recipe for success?

You can't talk about Indiana energy without focusing on coal (much more on that later). *Indiana Vision 2025* highlights the need for a diverse energy mix of clean coal, nuclear power and renewable resources – particularly in the face of numerous regulations from the federal Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

For Maassel, one-time president of the Northern Indiana Public Service Company, diversification just makes sense. Energy sources include wind, geothermal, nuclear, biodiesel, ethanol, shale and

natural gas, solar, petroleum and more. And while nuclear power might be too expensive for Indiana to invest in presently, it is still a national player.

"I've got to admit a diversified portfolio is one of those things that I think there's a fairly large agreement around what it means at the high and the wide levels. ... I think there is an agreement that, at a national level, nuclear certainly plays a part in our mix going forward, as do all of the other resources we touched on."

Smith emphasizes the need to decide which technologies are around for good – and which ones are a flash in the pan.

"When I think about diversification, one of the things that I can't help but wonder is that we have theories that say certain kinds of energies are better than others, and for the last five years we've gotten the opportunity to pursue those ideas ... and they're kind of gems in our eye right now," he indicates.

"I wonder: 'How do these industries and technologies mature over time?' And we start to come to understand the positive aspects of a given energy source and the negative impacts. And we decided to have to learn to live with those negatives. I don't know where this sorts out long term. Pick your favorite technology; it's wonderful until

Superior Infrastructure: Key Goals

- Create and implement a plan to position Indiana as a net exporter of energy.
- Diversify Indiana's energy mix with an emphasis on clean coal, nuclear power and renewables.
- Identify and implement workable energy conservation strategies.
- Develop and implement a strategic water resource plan that ensures adequate fresh water for citizens and business.
- Develop and implement new fiscal systems to support the array of infrastructure projects critical to economic growth.
- Aggressively build out the state's advanced telecommunications networks.

