Energy Wisdom Needed With Candidates Running for Public Office

C0-Authored by Ronald Stein & Yoshihiro Muronaka

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Open-ended questions will stimulate Energy Wisdom CONVERSATIONS among the Press, Candidates, and all public debates.

The United States—the world's largest economy and a nation whose political decisions ripple across every continent—depends on elected officials who understand how modern energy systems truly function within the larger framework of global economics, policy, and human welfare. Without informed leadership, policies aimed at sustainability or economic growth can easily miss the reality of how energy actually flows through every aspect of modern life: production, industry, transportation, agriculture, digital infrastructure, and global supply chains.

Too often, public debates focus only on a single dimension—electricity—while ignoring the material foundations that make modern civilization possible. Wind turbines, solar panels, semiconductors, medical equipment, pharmaceuticals, shipping, aviation, the military, global agriculture, industrial heat—all of these rely on a complex combination of energy sources and petrochemical materials. If elected leaders do not fully grasp this interconnected picture, even well-intentioned policies may unintentionally undermine economic

reliability, energy security, and national resilience.

In many parts of the world, attempts to “electrify everything” have collided with the limits of intermittent renewable generation. Wind and solar play valuable roles, especially for reducing emissions and diversifying the grid, but they cannot provide round-the-clock baseload power, and they cannot exist without extensive materials that must be mined, processed, transported, and fabricated—almost always using petroleum-based fuels and petrochemical feedstocks. Electricity, in its six methods of generation—coal, natural gas, nuclear, hydro, wind, and solar—cannot operate without the mining, industrial supply chains, transportation logistics, and petrochemical materials that oil enables. This is not an opinion; it is industrial physics.

This point is often missed in political debates. Energy is not simply “electricity.” Our modern civilization depends on materials and supply chains that are fundamentally physical. Even digital technologies—including data centers, AI computing, cloud services, satellites, and telecommunications—consume increasing amounts of electricity and rely on products made from hydrocarbons, and highly advanced materials. These realities should be at the center of national discussion, especially during election years.

Today’s soaring demand for solar panels, batteries, semiconductors, and advanced grid technologies reminds us that modern energy infrastructures are not merely about switching fuel sources. They are about the entire ecosystem of mining, chemical processing, precision manufacturing, international transport, and long-term maintenance. These inputs—from rare earths to specialty polymers—are deeply embedded in global manufacturing, and they remain inseparable from petroleum-based supply chains. A transition that ignores these realities risks damaging precisely the industries needed to sustain future innovation, manufacturing capacity, and economic

competitiveness on the world stage.

At the same time, the geopolitical and ethical dimensions of mining cannot be overlooked. Increasing dependence on cobalt, nickel, lithium, and rare earths raises serious concerns regarding labor standards, environmental destruction, and strategic vulnerabilities. The world has already witnessed supply chains influenced by authoritarian regimes, fragile political systems, and regions where child labor remains a daily reality. If our energy strategy merely shifts environmental burdens across borders while claiming sustainability at home, then the moral credibility of such policies becomes questionable. True sustainability must include ethical supply chains.

Meanwhile, nations around the world are quietly reassessing nuclear power. Even countries that previously moved away from nuclear power are now considering new reactors to supply continuous, reliable, and low-carbon electricity. Small Modular Reactors (SMRs), advanced safety designs, and expanding international interest suggest that nuclear may play a far more central role in the global future than political debates in the United States currently acknowledge. If America does not remain engaged in nuclear innovation, it may find itself importing technology from other nations decades from now.

Which brings us back to the essence of Energy Wisdom: that decisions about energy are, at their core, decisions about society itself—about what kind of economy we wish to sustain, what kind of communities we wish to build, and what trade-offs we are prepared to accept. These are not technical questions alone. They are cultural, economic, geopolitical, and ethical questions that demand serious public conversation, especially from those seeking public office.

For candidates who hope to lead—whether as Mayor, Governor, or President—Energy Wisdom requires comprehensive awareness: that

modern civilization is not powered by electricity alone; that materials matter; that oil underpins global logistics and manufacturing; that ethical mining must be part of any responsible strategy; that nuclear power is returning to the global stage; and that Earth's mineral and energy resources, while vast, are ultimately finite. America's prosperity has always been tied to its ability to understand industrial realities, not simply political aspirations.

With this in mind, the following open-ended questions are designed not to trap or embarrass political figures, but to invite deeper discussion. If an aspiring leader can articulate thoughtful responses to these six questions, voters will have a clearer sense of whether that person possesses the level of Energy Wisdom needed for national leadership.

Six Open-Ended Questions for Candidates

1. Continuous, dependable power remains essential for industrial society. Voters deserve to know how a candidate plans to secure reliable electricity under all conditions. Thus, how do you view the limitations of relying solely on wind and solar electricity as the foundation for energy policy?
2. More than 6,000 products rely on petrochemicals every day, many of which are essential to health, safety, mobility, agriculture, and national defense. What role do you believe petroleum-based products play in sustaining modern industrial civilization?
3. New nuclear reactor technologies are emerging worldwide How do you see nuclear power contributing to America's long-term electricity needs, and will America lead—or follow?
4. Are you willing to support international supply chains for minerals and metals that avoid child labor and environmental exploitation and what are your views on the ethical dimensions of global mining for critical minerals?

5. Emission reductions are possible without dismantling essential industries, so how should the United States balance oil use with efforts to reduce emissions?
6. Do you believe Earth's finite natural resources require a wiser approach to energy planning and consumption, and if so, what principles should guide national policy over the next half-century to maintain the supply chain of products and sufficient electricity to meet ever growing demands?

America—and the world—needs leaders who can think beyond slogans, beyond narrow categories of energy, and beyond short-term political cycles. Energy Wisdom is not about favoring one source over another. It is about recognizing the full industrial reality that sustains modern life and approaching energy decisions with humility, responsibility, and practical understanding. That is the kind of leadership the twenty-first century requires.

Please share this information with teachers, students, and friends to encourage Energy Literacy conversations at the family dinner table.

[BIO: Yoshihiro Muronaka, P.E. Jp is a chemical engineer who currently focuses on evaluating net-zero and decarbonization policies, advocating alternative energy concepts such as "carbon symbiosis," and promoting balanced international energy cooperation.]

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E-Mail Ronald Stein: Ronald.Stein@EnergyLiteracy.net