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The Jobs Plan America Needs

By Bobby Jindal

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It's the kind of stimulus that could get our country moving again—creating millions of jobs, lowering prices for consumers, revitalizing our economy. And unlike President Obama's "stimulus" disaster—which created nearly a trillion dollars in spending and debt for the federal government—this jobs program would actually raise revenue for the federal government.

What is this economic elixir? The answer is simple: affordable American energy.

The energy sector creates millions of jobs on its own. But just as important are the jobs that affordable energy can create throughout our economy. Affordable energy prices mean more money in people's pockets, allowing Americans access to better housing, nutrition, education, health care, environmental protections, and other consumer goods and services. This in turn stimulates local economies across the nation, creating additional jobs.

Affordable energy also gives American businesses a competitive advantage relative to their peers. The hydraulic fracturing revolution has lowered energy and feedstock prices in the United States, giving manufacturers reasons to make new investments. In many cases, companies are bringing jobs back from overseas on to our shores, creating well-paid, high-quality jobs across the country—including in Louisiana. Our state has more residents, more workers, and a higher per capita income than ever before—and affordable, abundant energy is one major reason why.

If we develop our untapped energy resources, our nation could see a new burst of economic growth and prosperity. One study, noting the benefits of unconventional oil and gas exploration, found that this fracking revolution created 2.1 million jobs in 2012—and could create another 1.8 million jobs between now and 2025.

But a sustained energy boom is far from inevitable. The jobs that affordable energy can create will only come to our shores if we make the right policy choices—and sadly, too often we haven't.

Why hasn't America developed our full energy potential—what stands in our way? The answer there is simple too: President Obama. Like many liberals, President Obama believes in making energy less affordable, and more scarce, for the American people. That's why, even as crude oil production has skyrocketed on private lands—rising 61% in just the last four years—it has fallen on publicly-owned property

in the same time span. The Administration is deliberately squandering the opportunities that affordable energy can bring by refusing to develop all the energy resources owned by the American people.

The Obama Administration's failure to utilize all our public energy resources has kept energy prices higher than they need to be—and its myriad new regulations on energy will raise prices higher still. That's not political rhetoric—that's what the President himself said. After admitting in his 2008 campaign that his anti-growth agenda would cause electricity prices to "necessarily skyrocket," President Obama appointed as his first Energy Secretary Steven Chu—who publicly mused that "somehow we have to figure out how to boost the price of gasoline to the levels in Europe."

That's the energy agenda of the Obama Administration, and liberals in general. The Left thinks that, if we unilaterally disarm our economy by making energy prohibitively expensive, other nations will follow our lead. As with most of this President's other failed foreign policy gambits, however, he is sure to be disappointed.

Developing all of America's abundant energy resources can improve our national security—reducing our reliance on hostile and unstable regimes for imported fuel, while improving relations with our allies. For instance, approving the Keystone XL pipeline—which this Administration has dithered on for five long years—would help build bridges with the Canadian government, whose Prime Minister, Stephen Harper, reportedly views President Obama as his "frustrator-in-chief." And increasing global supplies of natural gas could over time lessen Russian President Putin's energy leverage among the nations of eastern and central Europe.

The America Next plan being released today outlines this vision—a vision of energy abundance and energy security. Our plan includes a series of tangible proposals that can lower energy prices, spark economic growth, and generate additional royalty revenue for both states and the federal government. Most importantly, our plan to promote energy abundance stands in direct contrast to the Obama Administration's tired policies of energy scarcity and sluggish growth.

With families still struggling from years of economic stagnation, and the labor participation rate near 36-year lows, it's about time for our country to adopt policies that can generate additional growth. Let's embrace energy abundance, and use the resources with which our country has been blessed to create a better future for all.

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