



Message from the Executive Director

Last fall, when I began working as the new Executive Director of the Southern Growth Policies Board, I joined an organization that for almost 40 years has brought Southern leaders together to tackle hard, complex issues with solutions based on information and constructive conversations. We are devoted to strengthening the South's economy and creating the highest possible quality of life for all Southerners.

Southern Growth spent the past year focused on energy. Our work augments an on-going discussion that Southern governors have been having on energy issues at the National Governors' Association, the Southern Governors' Association and with the Southern States Energy Board. Energy is one of the most important, and difficult, issues facing the South. H. L. Mencken framed the energy conundrum perfectly when he suggested that all simple solutions to complex problems are wrong.

Energy policy is frustratingly complex. If the problem could be solved simply by producing more energy, we would focus our American innovation prowess and entrepreneurial spirit and solve the problem. But as a nation we struggle with balancing our growing energy needs with policy debates that incorporate the economy, global competitiveness, environmental impact, national security, safety, regional differences, consumer costs, and personal freedoms.

Regardless of any changes in the supply mix, or efforts at energy efficiency, almost everyone agrees that global energy demand will rise significantly in the coming years, guaranteeing an ongoing debate. Estimates are that we will need something close to 50 percent more energy in the next 25 years.

Through our research and conversations with Southerners we have become convinced that there are no simple energy solutions, but there are solutions. We heard that people were confused and wanted more information that they could trust. We heard consistently that people believe that no matter what else we do there should be a big push for energy efficiency. We also heard that Americans are optimistic that we will find new ideas and new technologies that will lead to energy solutions.

In these tough economic times, the South finds itself in a unique position of high potential in both natural resources and people resources. It is a great time for Southern leaders to work together; to collaborate to position the South as a national leader in energy production, jobs, innovation, ideas, and cooperation.

Some of our greatest opportunities, as is usually the case in recessions, are where significant change is taking place. The economic downturn and the recent turnover in our national political leadership have resulted in transformational changes in our energy policy and public energy investments. Whether you agree or disagree with the changes, change can result in new opportunities. Many countries are competing to become global leaders in emerging energy technologies. The South has all the assets to compete for new jobs generated by the new technologies.

Over the years, Southern Growth has been the catalyst for dialogues about globalization, entrepreneurship, workforce evolution, educational excellence and this year, energy. Southern Growth is many groups of professionals and volunteers from across the South trying to convert conversations, calculations, and collaborations into actions that yield results.

This report is designed to help Southern leaders lead in our national energy discussions.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ted Abernathy', is positioned above the typed name.

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