

Statement Regarding Clean Elections Debate

Now that solar energy costs one half to one third of what coal or natural gas fired electricity costs, and since the Arizona constitution charges the Commission with providing reliable and affordable electricity to consumers, solar is the only logical choice for energy generation in Arizona. It also signals a new and sustained economic boom as solar generation facilities are built to export less costly solar energy to other states, bringing endless prosperity and good jobs to Arizona.

The framers of the Arizona Constitution made it clear their intent to protect consumers against the power of corporations and their influence on the Governor and legislature by having an elected corporation commission. Anyone who runs to be a regulator on the platform of diminishing the regulator's power, like our Republican opponents, is clearly running for the wrong reasons, and they are the perfect example of why the state constitution put the task of protecting consumers with an elected corporation commission. They are obviously just listening to corporate lobbyists and parroting their talking points that ignore reality and consumers' interests. As a commissioner, I have always fought for the lowest rates for electricity, along with ensuring reliability. They obviously have no interest in that. They want to just have the Commission let utilities make all the decisions, and we know when utility-friendly commissioners have been elected previously, that this just resulted in higher rates and record profits for utility corporations.

When looking at each rate case, the Commission takes sworn testimony and reviews exhibits, with cross examination, along with public comment in a quasi-judicial system, then the Commissioners set the utility rates and other conditions, using those facts and evidence. That approach, when followed, should prevent political and ideology-based decisions. But our Republican opponents already have their minds made up, and are promoting small nuclear reactors, despite asserting during the debate that the technology is still being tested and is about ten years from being market ready. It is illuminating that they were ready to fully implement it without even knowing that new nuclear is the most expensive form of new electricity, which has been an established fact at the Commission for years. Their parroted positions are exactly the talking points of corporate lobbyists, which figures, because they both were previously lobbyists for utilities. Mr. Thompson is also on a natural gas advocacy committee based in Washington, DC, which is a built-in conflict of interest. It is noteworthy that neither of our opponents ever even uttered the word "solar" during the hour-long debate, despite its overwhelming popularity among Arizona consumers. Only a transition to clean solar energy from fossil fuel generation can lower and actually stabilize utility rates, with the enormous benefit of cleaning up our air and saving large amounts precious water.

Our Republican opponents also blamed communities affected by coal plant closures for their new economic peril, even calling assistance to them "foreign aid," yet skipped over the fact that solar power could be immediately co-located at these sites, solving the problems and providing an even better economy in the state. I want to solve the problem and do what the best for everyone. When I am re-elected, I will continue my vigilance and consumer advocacy.