

Electric Cars and Home Energy Efficiency by Dwayne Escola
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The Middle East Revolution: Let's also start one here!

Citizens of many Middle East countries are seeking liberty. We should do the same – let's resolve to become independent of Middle East oil by using our **“people power”**.

Energy is a subject that all political parties agree needs addressing. The fuel we use to run our industries, businesses, transportation and homes has a drastic effect on our economy, foreign policy, sense of security and the world's environment and sustainability.

Let's focus on keeping our billions of dollars of energy money in US business hands and in the hands of families rather than in the hands of people like Gadhafi. A wonderful side effect of taking the steps outlined below would be that we could also reduce the number of our sons and daughters we send into harm's way to help secure an oil supply.

Reducing our need for foreign oil should be a two pronged approach: 1) decrease our energy needs; and 2) increase our US-based fuel supply. Ridgefield is currently one of the 14 towns in Connecticut which, with the help of a grant from the US Department of Energy, has launched the “Neighbor to Neighbor Challenge”. This challenge calls for 1000 Ridgefield homes to reduce their energy usage by 20% within the next 3 years (see www.ctenergychallenge.com). A \$75 home energy evaluation, which on average reduces energy cost by \$300 to \$500 per year, is one of many items in this program. The energy evaluation can be initiated by any household and is a key step in using **“people power”** to move this revolution against Middle East oil forward. If 50% of all US households took this small action we would save \$52 billion/year on energy costs.

The second prong of our approach, increasing our US-based energy supply, can be altered from the normal “large utility plant” approach to using **“people power”** to move power generation to homes (distributed power generation). For example, if the next time you need a new car, you choose an electric car and you also install 8 solar panels (2,000 watts) on your roof or in your yard for a net cost for this “Sunshine Fuel” here in Connecticut of \$7,500, you could save \$80,000 in gasoline over the next 25-year life of the solar panels. This is one important way **we, the people**, can contribute to our own Middle East Revolution. In this example a household can participate in the fight against our dependence on foreign oil while saving money at an internal rate of return of 20%. If only one-third of US households switched to electric cars and installed solar or wind generation we would save \$110 billion/year on energy costs.

I urge us all to do our part on both prongs of this Middle East Revolution – decreasing our energy need (conservation) and increasing our distributed energy supply – **“people power”**. (Reference material is on file.)

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