

# Just Vote for Kerry Anyway

by Jeremy M. Barker

**A** month ago, Sen. John Kerry's energy plan was a minor part of his platform, with the economy and the war in Iraq taking precedence. But as gas prices approach an all-time high (the national average over \$2.25 a gallon at the pump), and workers are beginning to feel the squeeze, energy is becoming political dynamite. Unfortunately, anyone hoping for reassuring news from Kerry, who was stumping his energy policy on Seattle's waterfront May 26, came away severely disappointed.

He did score some points by telling people what they want to hear. He praised Washington Sen. Maria Cantwell's efforts to clean up Hanford and promised more federal aid as president. And on drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, an environmentalist cause *célèbre*, he defiantly opposed Bush's plans, saying, "There is no possible way for the United States of America to drill its way out of this!"

But in practical terms, Kerry offered little to reassure Americans. He honestly admitted that increased consumption in America, and growing demand for energy in rapidly expanding nations like China, meant that we would be facing increasing energy costs in the foreseeable future, unless we can produce new, cleaner energy sources. All well and good, but his plans for developing these sources are somewhat lacking in details. He praised several local companies working on hydrogen and fuel cell technologies, but his promise to create thousands of jobs in these sectors rings hollow—he can't explain how he will do this. One of the only specific policy claims he made was a promise to offer a \$4,000 tax incentive to people if they buy hybrid cars. Unfortunately, this does not really differentiate him from Bush, who has supported both fuel cell research with federal funds and already offers a tax break for hybrid owners.

The irony is that Kerry's now infamous support for a \$.50 a gallon gas tax increase back in the early '90s, intended to decrease consumption of fuel, is about the most extensive and progressive bit of energy policy he seems to have figured out. The fact that President Bush can't seem to do much bet-

ter should be cold comfort for the entrenched liberals, who braved an hour-long wait in the rain to see Kerry. In order to win, Kerry will have to offer something more than simply being the Anti-Bush.



photos by Raphael

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