

## **Text Version for Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack's Biomass 2011 Keynote Video**

*[The video shows Secretary Vilsack standing at the podium at the Biomass 2011 Conference, speaking to the audience.]*

*Secretary Vilsack:* I didn't take physics. I didn't take chemistry. I barely passed biology. So I am obviously in the wrong crowd today. But I am here today and appreciate the opportunity to first and foremost acknowledge the... the extraordinary leadership that Secretary Chu has provided the country as the Secretary of Energy, putting a spotlight and a focus on the importance of renewable energy and fuels for this country's future. This is an extraordinarily exciting time in this space and it's probably one of the reasons why this is an overflowing crowd today.

The President has been very specific. He has directed a challenge to every single American, every single business owner, every single scientist, every single university, every single person in government, and that is that this country has got to move away from its over-reliance—its addiction to foreign oil. He's challenged us in the next 10 years to reduce our reliance by one-third.

And we've already made a down payment on this. Over the course of the last two-and-a-half years, we've gone from importing roughly 62% of our oil to now about 50%, but we have a ways to go.

So there are a number of reasons why the President's goal is important. National security, economic security, job security, energy security, environmental security. And that's why the President put forward a three-part strategy.

When we meet the 36-billion-gallon threshold set by Congress under the Renewable Fuel Standard, we will see \$100 billion invested in new plant construction in rural America. We will create—according to some—as many as a million new jobs at a time when we desperately need new employment.

We will help to improve the income opportunities for farmers who struggle. So this conference is extraordinarily important, and the people who are here, who are experimenting with different types and processes that will lead us to a more secure energy future, are extraordinarily important, not just to the country, not just to national security, but to the ability of the rural parts of this country to provide enough opportunity that we can continue to have young families live, work, and raise their families in that part, so we can continue to have the value system that's perpetuated by those who live in rural America.

I hear a lot about this, this discussion of energy as I travel; and I hear about all of the difficulties, and all of the challenges, and all of the barriers. And let me close by suggesting that we in America have had enough of that kind of talk. We hear it every day about how we can't do things. How difficult things are. How competitive things are. Well, the people in this room, the companies and businesses in this room, the government agencies in this room, can literally turn that conversation on its head.

It is time for America to get back in the game. It's time for America to do what America does best: to show the world what was once impossible is imminently possible. It's a time for America to continue to be the innovative leader. It's time for America not to worry about whether or not it can pay its debts, but lead this world and this nation to a far better place, so that the next succeeding generation of Americans indeed does have it better and a stronger America than the one we inherited.

And folks, I'm telling you, it's up to us. And it starts here... at this conference... today. Thank you.