In his inaugural address, this morning, it took President Obama a mere 228 words to mention the word “energy”. This is instructive when compared to George W. Bush’s second inaugural address in which he waited until – well, um…, he never used the word “energy”. But, to be fair, neither did Jimmy Carter, who took office in the shadow of an energy crisis spurred by OPEC’s manipulation of oil markets. And history demonstrates that Jimmy Carter clearly understood the importance of reducing the nation’s dependence on foreign oil. He helped create an ambitious set of new policies designed to encourage renewable energy and alternative fuel development.

President Obama has done more than simply invite energy policy to the head table. More precisely, he has declared that “each day brings further evidence that the ways we use energy strengthen our adversaries and threaten our planet.” And how right he is. Oil dollars finance foreign military development, embolden our critics, and cause our leaders to make nice to people with whom we should strongly disagree. Our national reliance on coal and oil to move us, shed light on us, and cool our homes threatens our ability to achieve ambitious carbon reduction goals.

To acknowledge all of this up front, to make it a key factor on this his most glorious and historic day, is cause for even greater hope. It suggests that we may see some success in recent Congressional efforts to create ambitious new energy initiatives. At a minimum, it ensures that the administration will not be able to ignore the importance of aggressively shifting our energy priorities. Fasten your seatbelt.