The heat wave that has smothered the Eastern seaboard like a heavy, sweaty blanket has apparently done nothing to inspire the U.S. Senate to pass a climate bill, or take major steps on the energy front. Insiders report that Harry Reid's "stripped down" energy bill will not only dodge the climate debate, but it will also fail to propose a renewable energy standard for the nation's electric utilities. Reid reportedly says that he just can't find the 60 votes needed to get the job done. In the meantime, the nation's military establishment is pushing aggressively to promote renewable energy development on its own facilities.

It was so hot in Washington D.C., during a recent visit, that spending a day walking the air-conditioned halls of the Pentagon was a great relief. I was invited there to talk about energy regulation, and about 40 attorneys from the Department of Defense and the various branches of the military showed up — to listen and to talk. The questions were insightful and evidence of active engagement in developing renewable energy was strong.

Green energy is big business in the military these days. It offers both strategic value and environmental benefits. First, there is the inevitable link of energy dependency to global conflict. As Paul Roberts wrote in this 2004 book *The End of Oil*, "Inevitably, as oil became inseparably tied to diplomacy, it became inseparably linked with war as well. Not only did industrialized nations need oil to wage war (the modern army is now a 'mechanized' force, with tanks, ships, and planes), but countries increasingly went to war for oil." In recent years, military strategist have also come to recognize the role that energy efficiency and green power can have in protecting troops. Greater efficiency means fewer fuel convoys, which are such inviting targets for roadside bombers. Green power offers the enhanced reliability that comes from fuel diversity.

Congress recognized these benefits in the Energy Policy Act of 2005 which imposed no renewable energy requirements on the regulated utilities, but required power serving the military to reach 7.5% renewable content by 2013. The Army and Navy voluntarily upped the ante by pledging to be 25% renewable by 2020. Congress then adopted the 25% requirement in the National Defense Authorization Act of 2007 (10 U.S.C.S. Section 2911(e)).

Although the ambitious renewable energy standard for the military was a bipartisan effort by Congress (it passed the Senate by unanimous consent), the same institution seems unable to adopt even a watered-down renewable content standard for the rest of the nation. What is the difference? Strong opposition to the national

standard from electric utilities – especially those in states that appear less well-endowed with renewable resources. So, as the Senate refuses to vote out a national renewable energy standard, it’s not that the individual members don’t “get it”. More than anything else, it’s that certain powerful electric utilities don’t want it.