

## Stan Meiburg's Eight Guiding Principles

1. Invest in information.
2. Base statements on science and the law.
3. Seek to understand others' views better than your own.
4. Explore interests, not positions.
5. Create opportunities for mutual gain wherever possible.
6. Pursue conservation and energy efficiency first!
7. Take confidence from past success.
8. Promote an ethic of Stewardship.

*Selections from Keynote Address presented by Dr. A. Stanley Meiburg, Acting Regional Administrator for EPA Region 4, at the IEIA Energy Forum 2009: Challenges and Possibilities for Alabama, October 13-14, at the Birmingham Botanical Gardens.*

1. **Invest in Information.** Real information, real data—not just information that supports your position, but information that helps accurately characterize the environment

- o Examples: current debate about mountaintop mining, greenhouse gas inventory.

2. **Base your statements on science.**

- o Our guidance from the Administrator is to base our decisions on science and the law.
- o There are some caveats
  - Most science is probabilistic. Beware of absolute statements.
  - Stipulate what you don't know.
  - There are benefits to partial information; don't be afraid of it.
- o Recognize the cost of certainty. This works both ways.
  - For industry, if you insist on waiting on certainty before taking action, you can miss opportunities for early, cost-effective changes which prevent problems. It's cheaper to prevent pollution now than to clean it up later.
  - For environmental interests, the marginal costs of eliminating the last molecule of pollution can be very high. A standard of absolute safety under any circumstances may be unattainable.

3. **Seek to understand others' views better than your own.** It's a lot easier to engage in dialogue if it starts from a position of mutual understanding and agreement on common facts. We can follow St. Francis here: Grant that we may not so much seek to be understood, as to understand.

4. **Explore interests, not positions.**

- o You can have common interests with people with whom you otherwise might disagree.

- o To cite the obvious example, while I personally believe that the science debate on climate change is over, not everyone holds this opinion.
- o But I don't know many people who really think it's a good idea to jeopardize our national security by wastefully expanding energy consumption in ways that render us vulnerable to influence from others, especially, for example, by borrowing large sums of money from overseas to purchase oil from areas of the world who do not share our values. Surely there is common ground to be found here.
- o And there is room for common ground, especially in a manufacturing center like Birmingham, for promoting enterprises which will make America a leader in green energy, something which the world will need and which we should be making here.

5. **Create options for mutual gain wherever possible.** Here's one example. Some parts of the agricultural community have been concerned about the impact of efforts to address climate change on their costs of production. But there is great interest in potential on-farm use of biomass, which could both reduce production costs and help reduce carbon emissions.

- o Opportunities also exist in the agriculture sector for growing biomass for energy, and using forestry as a source of potential carbon credits.
- o Innovation in methods of governance can help as well as innovations in technology.

6. **Pursue conservation and energy efficiency first!** This needs to not be just lip service.

- o I've heard it argued in Georgia that efficiency gains can be had at a third the cost per kilowatt of adding additional capacity. If this is so, why wouldn't you do this first?
- o True low-cost energy is not energy where the environmental costs are externalized.
- o I have seen presentations where speakers showed a projected curve of growing energy demand as if it was inevitable. We need to shape this curve. It is not dictated by the laws of physics.
- o This won't necessarily be easy. It may, for example, shape aspects of our community design, both in structures themselves, and in land use patterns that enable alternatives to single occupancy vehicles and promote walkable communities.

7. **Take confidence from past success.**

- o Look back at the Clean Air Act.
- o In 1970, catalytic converters didn't exist, flue gas desulfurization (scrubbers) didn't exist, selective catalytic reduction didn't exist.
- o Opponents claimed that the Clean Air Act would ruin the economy.
- o It was said that to meet the targets for pollution control in cars, you would have to put a computer in your car!
- o Well, we know how that turned out.
- o From 1980 to 2008, Gross Domestic Product went up by 126%, Vehicle Miles Traveled went up by 91%, Energy Consumption went up by 29%, and the U.S. population increased by 34%.
- o But in the face of all this, we **decreased** aggregate emissions of the six criteria air pollutants by **54%**!

**8. Promote an ethic of Stewardship.**

- o Any of you who were Boy Scouts or Girl Scouts remember that one of the first rules of Scouting was to leave any place you went better than you found it.
- o You'll never find this rule written into any EPA regulation, but this one sentence is probably a better guide to right actions than six volumes of the Code of Federal Regulations.
- o And everyone here can do it. It is fundamentally an individual choice.
- o And you can do it at all levels: in your congregation, in your community, in the State, the nation, the world.
- o EPA has some good resources in this regard.
- o On EPA's web site, [www.epa.gov](http://www.epa.gov), if you search on environmental stewardship you'll find a whole host of information there.
- o And as far as energy is concerned, if you go to [www.energystar.gov](http://www.energystar.gov), you'll find EPA's Guide for Congregations and all sorts of tools that can help you think about things you can do.
- o It's very broad ranging. Over the last couple of years, we've given awards to congregations ranging from the First Baptist Church of Dallas, to the San Francisco Zen Center, to the Swarthmore Presbyterian Church in Swarthmore, Pennsylvania, to the religious order of the Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary in Monroe, Michigan.
- o If these folks can do it, so can you.