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Breakthrough Institute Documents Distortions by Bobby Kennedy Jr. on Cape Wind

Renews Call for Bobby Kennedy's Resignation from NRDC

Breakthrough Institute co-directors, Ted Nordhaus and Michael Shellenberger, issued the following statement:

In his op-ed in the *San Francisco Chronicle* on January 11, 2006, Bobby Kennedy has continued his campaign of lies, distortions, and misinformation against the critically important Cape Wind Project. In so doing, Kennedy is not simply destroying his own reputation as someone who is serious about addressing global warming, he also is threatening what is arguably the most important clean energy development in the world while encouraging the already substantial public perception that environmentalists are elitists who only care about protecting their own private playgrounds.

Ironically, Kennedy attacked us for dividing the environmental movement because we had the temerity to criticize his untenable public position in opposition to Cape Wind. Yet it is Bobby, not us, who is in fact dividing the environmental movement on this crucial issue.

Nearly every national environmental organization in the country supports the Cape Wind Project including Bobby Kennedy's employer, the National Resources Defense Council. The NRDC wrote that Cape Wind "is, to our knowledge, the largest single source of supply-side reductions in CO2 currently proposed in the United States, and perhaps in the world."

There is no credible environmental opposition to the project. Angered by Bobby's public advocacy against Cape Wind, over 200 of America's leading environmentalists sent an open letter to Bobby on January 3, 2006 asking him to reverse his position.

The environmental movement is united on Cape Wind except for Bobby. Yet, Bobby, due to his name, his prominence, and his access to the *New York Times* opinion page, would lead Americans to believe that there is a genuine debate about the environmental benefits and impacts of Cape Wind. There is none. Many environmentalists, including Bobby, complain when the media publish the views of the tiny minority of global warming deniers in the employ of the fossil fuel lobby in the name of balance. Yet Bobby takes advantage of the same effort to achieve balance to publicize his own distortions of the facts surrounding the

Cape Wind development. He does so in service of his own selfish motives, namely, to protect the views from the Kennedy compound in Hyannis Port from a development that he fears would sully them.

Environmentalists have long prided their strict adherence to science and the facts and have viewed that adherence as central to their credibility and their success. Bobby's employer, NRDC was largely founded upon that premise.

Unfortunately, Bobby's continued and blatant distortions of the facts and the science related to Cape Wind threaten to undermine that credibility. For this reason, we are today renewing our public demand that Kennedy resign his post as senior attorney with NRDC. At a time when both the environment and science are under siege, the national environmental movement in general and NRDC in particular, simply cannot afford to allow Bobby Kennedy's selfish and arrogant assertion of personal and familial privilege to undermine its credibility.

Here are just a few of the distortions and outright lies that Kennedy has made about Cape Wind:

Kennedy Lie #1: “[Cape Wind] will ruin the livelihoods of hundreds of Cape Cod's treasured commercial fishing families by evicting them from their primary fishing grounds.”

The Facts: The largest union of commercial fishermen, the International Seafarers Union, supports Cape Wind. Most of the area in question is too shallow for commercial fishing. The cables that Kennedy claims will entangle fishing nets will be buried 6 feet under the ocean floor, specifically to avoid interaction with fishing gear or anchors.

Kennedy Distortion:#2: [Cape Wind turbines] will “be visible for up to 26 miles.”

The Facts: In clear conditions, from a distance of 6 miles at the shoreline of Hyannis Port, the wind turbines will appear one half inch high on the horizon if you were to extend your arm straight in front of you and separated your thumb and index finger. From the Town of Nantucket, at 13.8 miles, the wind turbines would appear as tiny specks on the horizon in clear conditions.

Kennedy Lie #3: [Cape Wind] will pose “a dangerous navigational hazard to air and marine traffic.”

The Facts: The wind turbines will be spaced between 600 and 900 feet apart leaving ample room for ships to navigate the area. There has been no finding by any responsible agency or party that the turbines will in any way effect or endanger air traffic.

Kennedy Lie #4: [Cape Wind] “requires a quarter billion dollars in government subsidies.”

The Facts: Cape Wind is raising 100 percent of the capital for its project from private investors — a process being led by Martha’s Vineyard resident, Theodore Roosevelt IV, great grandson of the great conservationist American president.

That said, the Breakthrough Institute strongly supports larger subsidies for wind farms, including the well-designed Cape Wind project, through the expansion of the Federal Production Tax Credit for wind energy, which reduces taxes on wind energy. By way of contrast, the U.S. government spends ten times more money subsidizing the nuclear, coal, gas and oil industries than clean energy industries.

Kennedy Lie #5: "The noise of the turbines will be audible onshore."

The Facts: There is simply no way the Cape Wind turbines will be heard, over the wind and waves, six miles away onshore. Engineer and retired Army officer, Solon Economou of South Dennis, MA, visited one of Denmark’s modern offshore wind farms and reported that he and the others on his trip couldn’t even hear the turbines at the base of the towers. In his op-ed criticizing Bobby, Officer Economou wrote, "In Denmark's newest, 72-turbine wind farm in the Baltic, we ran the boat right up against the wind tower and turned off the engine. The turbines were inaudible."

Kennedy Distortion #6: "A transformer substation rising 100 feet above the sound would house giant helicopter pads and 40,000 gallons of potentially hazardous oil."

The Facts: The "hazardous oil" Bobby is referring to is mineral oil, which will be stored in triple hulled containers, and is far less of a threat than the millions of gallons of fuel oils that are shipped across Nantucket Sound every year, much of it in single hulled tankers.

It is ironic that while Bobby, self-appointed environmental defender of Nantucket Sound, rails against the as yet established mineral oil threat, yet has nothing to say about the well-documented threat posed by transportation of fuel oil across the sound. The environmental group, the Coalition For Buzzards Bay, endorsed Cape Wind as a means of reducing accidents the one in 2003 when 100,000 gallons of oil en route to a power station spilled into Buzzards Bay killing 450 seabirds and contaminating beaches.

Kennedy Lie #7: [Cape Wind] "lights to warn airplanes away from the turbines will steal the stars and nighttime views."

The Facts: The wind turbine safety lights will be barely visible from shore — but nowhere nearly bright enough to impact the stars overhead.

Kennedy Distortion #8: "The Humane Society estimates the whirling turbines could every year kill thousands of migrating songbirds and sea ducks."

The Facts: Nearly every national environmental group decided to support the Cape Wind project after extensive studies of wind farms in Europe found very few bird deaths from the very slow moving windmill blades, which most birds easily avoid. Moreover, the Humane Society received money from Bobby Kennedy's allies, the Alliance to Protect Nantucket Sound, a coalition of wealthy homeowners, to kill the Cape Wind project. Economou sums it up best: "Only two birds were killed in two years at the Baltic wind farm. I'd wager that's fewer than the birds killed each year flying into the sides of the Kennedy compound in Hyannis." Global warming and oil spills, not windmills, are the greatest threat to birds.

Kennedy Lie #9: "There are many alternatives that would achieve the same benefits as Cape Wind without destroying this national treasure. Deep water technology is rapidly evolving, promising huge bounties of wind energy with fewer environmental and economic consequences. Scotland is preparing to build wind turbines in the Moray Firth more than 12 miles offshore. Germany is considering placing turbines as far as 27 miles off its northern shores."

The Facts: Moray Firth is a demonstration project, a heavily subsidized one, aimed at powering offshore oil rigs. The electricity from the windmills won't be cabled to shore. The project's developers say commercial applications of their technology are more than 10 years away. The Department of Energy also says deepwater wind farms are 10-15 years away. David K. Garman, Under Secretary of Energy, wrote in March, 2005, "As the first shallow water offshore project under review in the United States, utility-scale projects like Cape Wind are important to our national interest and a critical first step to building a domestic, globally competitive wind industry. Success in this project could also lay the foundation for a focused national investment to develop offshore wind technology in the coming years."

Kennedy Distortion #10: Thousands of small businesses, including marina owners, hotels, motels, whale watching tours and charter fishing operations will also be hurt. The Beacon Hill Institute at Suffolk University in Boston estimates a loss of up to 2,533 jobs because of the loss of tourism - and over a billion dollars to the local economy."

The Facts: The Beacon Hill study was paid for by Kennedy's anti-wind allies, the Egan Family Foundation, whose two sons are on the board of the Alliance to Protect Nantucket Sound. (The *Boston Globe* discovered this fact, which was hidden from Beacon Hill's original report.) There are no examples of wind mills hurting tourism. Just the opposite, there are many examples of them helping increase tourism. Even the Beacon Hill study acknowledged that, "on balance, tourists favor the windmills." Tourist visits to Denmark's wind farms are increasing. Wind power is in fact a venerable Cape Cod tradition. By the early 19th Century there were nearly one thousand working windmills on Cape and the Islands of Martha's Vineyard and Nantucket. They pumped water, ground grain, and made salt — they powered, in short, the local economy.

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