

Roth: Georgia Tea Party Teams Up with Sierra Club

While tea party-backed members of Congress and the Republican Party might be at odds over health care, the federal budget, the debt ceiling and a whole host of other things, crazier things have happened.

In Georgia, members of the Tea Party Patriots and the Sierra Club are joining forces to promote renewable energy. I've always thought green tea was healthy.

The Tea Party Patriots group in Georgia is suggesting that conservation is in fact a conservative principle. So, they have joined forces with the Sierra Club and formed the Green Tea Coalition.

The Tea Party Patriots' position is that consumers of power ought to have more choices in the electricity marketplace. And, more importantly, they ought to be able to place solar panels on their own homes and get access to cleaner electricity more affordably. In addition to being good stewards of the environment, according to the Tea Party Patriots, this is a fundamentally conservative ideal.

In other words, allowing energy to compete on a level playing field, according to the Tea Party Patriots, is a fundamental cornerstone of liberty. And so, what some narrow thinkers may call an unholy alliance has been born – one where conservation, promoting renewable energy and conservative energy principles are actually just good old-fashioned American principles. Seems like common green sense to me.

There is no mistaking that in the free market, where forms of energy are allowed to compete, more and more renewable sources of power are beginning to have a competitive advantage. Today, in Oklahoma, wind power is at its most competitive price

opportunity thanks to the visionary leadership of Oklahoma's industry leaders and some good public policy nudges from leaders like Gov. Mary Fallin and former Gov. Brad Henry and Secretary of Energy Mike Ming.

Additionally, cleaner-burning, affordable natural gas has begun to displace coal in power generation over the past decade. Since 2005, coal use in the power sector has declined 25 percent, while natural gas has increased by 62 percent. This reality has been responsible for some of the cleanest air Americans have enjoyed in a decade. Not to mention, it has helped encourage and spur innovation and competitiveness in the renewable marketplace, as natural gas' power flexibility is a partner to wind energy, while slow, cumbersome coal plants are not.

Today's reality is that common-sense energy use and policies that look to the market for the most cost-effective and environmentally sound solution are not ideals or platforms that belong to any one political party or any one side's viewpoint. Instead, it makes as much sense for all of us, as a good old cup of green tea.