Hello.

My name is Mitzi and I am a Petro-Holic, a Carbo-Holic.
My last fill up was 9 gallons three days ago.
My last plane flight was 24 hours ago for 2500 miles.
And, my last light switch turning on was 2 hours ago.

My name is Mitzi and I am a Petro-Holic.

My name is Mitzi and I am Energy Illiterate.
I cannot stand here and tell you the power measurement difference between a BtU and a KwH, the difference between Appalachian coal and Wyoming coal, or the carbon footprint of the newspaper that I read this morning. Even though I have been spending most of productive hours on energy issues for the past four years,

my name is Mitzi and I am Energy Illiterate.

My name is Mitzi and I suffer from Short-Termitis. Like most Americans, I believe in Benjamin Franklin: A penny saved is a penny earned. When I go to fulfill my shopping needs, my eyes gravitate to the "bargain" of 99 cents. When I see an incandescent bulb for 25 cents sitting next to a compact fluorescent bulb for two dollars & 50 cents, even though I know better, my natural inclination is to grab that incandescent which "costs" ninety percent less. That is, it costs less to buy even though it costs far more to own. I know better, but they get the better of me,

My name is Mitzi and I suffer from Short-Termitis.

My name is Mitzi and I am afflicted with Stove-Pipeitis. My emotions can rise to enthusiasm when faced with a great new solar product, a vision for electrifying all personal vehicles being executed by Better Place, or a concept for algae-based fuel. My time can be caught up working with one set of problems within one organization, even as the challenge is multi-faceted and multi- organizational. My name is Mitzi and I am afflicted with Stove-Pipeitis.

My name is Mitzi and I’m not alone. 300 m Americans share my affiliations.
You … I … We face a very serious challenge. In fact, just that is indicative of the problem as we do not face a challenge but an interacting set of challenges.

We are facing a Perfect Storm of, at least, the interaction of Fiscal Crisis, Peak Oil, and Global Warming. We can find solutions to each of these but "the" solution to one might aggravate or inhibit solving others. We must work to find a systems-of-systems solution set that will help us, all of the US and all of us around the globe, navigate this Perfect Storm to a Prosperous, Climate-Friendly Society.

To deal with this set of challenges, we must determine a path toward functional energy literacy for all American decision-makers on energy issues – which means all of us.

To deal with this set of challenges, we must find a path to change human nature of discounting the future in favor of the present and to end our borrowing from tomorrow to live today.

To deal with this set of challenges, we must find ways to move beyond stove-piped, single-point solution thinking to striving to understand systems-of-systems interactions and implications.

To deal with this set of challenges, we must change ourselves and our society.

And we must do this now. Our survival depends on it.

Almost every day, there are new revelations and data highlighting the seriousness of our situation when it comes to global finance, energy, and global warming.

Almost every day, there are seemingly magical announcements of some form of technological Silver Bullet that, hold your breath, will solve all our problems.

Let us be clear, however, that there is no such thing as a single technological Silver Bullet when it comes to these challenges. If we are going to navigate a path forward, it will be with a series of Silver BBs, each contributing in some way to moving us forward to a more sensible and sustainable future.

Some of these Silver BBs will be technological. Some will be policy driven. Some will derived from financial opportunities. There are many paths that will provide Silver BBs.

But, we will not succeed if we do not have social change.

And, when it comes to the social change necessary for navigating this perfect storm, we are speaking of a societal change easily of the same degrees of complexity and, in many ways, much more difficult.

And, the terrifying realities of Climate Change and implications of Peak Oil we have no time to waste.
During the four years of the Bush administration, Energy was not a topic that could be discussed in the halls of the Pentagon. I would go through the Pentagon asking each General and Admiral, I met, if Energy was in the QDR. And would get nothing but a deer in the headlights response. The QDR -quadrennial defense review is a report required by congress every four years, to look into the future.)

“Energy” was OWNED by VP Cheney. It seemed that even if you talked about something owned by Cheney, you were putting your job at risk. And that was clearly understood, when the Chief of staff of the Army’s replacement was announced a year in advance right after had spoken the truth to Congress on the numbers that would be needed in Iraq. His numbers were twice as large as those being used by the White House.

All of this is prelude to something to spark, I hope, a conversation as to how we can foster this social change and speed it along. Certainly, while not a welcome factor, four-dollar-a-gallon gasoline showed itself to be a motivational factor for changed behavior and increased energy literacy.

And, a Presidential candidate, President-Elect, and President making “green jobs” and smarter energy behaviors a central point of his discussion and policies for moving the nation forward will be a motivational factor for changed behavior and spark a reduction in the nation’s energy and climate illiteracy rates.

For my part, I have been in the nexus of a group that has sought, in our way, to help foster and hasten societal change when it comes to energy issues.

Four years ago, in Oct ’04, my former boss, Jim Woolsey, Deputy Secretary of the Navy and then the CIA Director, gave a speech and was asked ”What would you do if elected President?” He responded “Eliminate our dependence on Mid East oil.” A friend who was in the audience, the former CIO of the Navy, called me from California to ask me to lunch. When we met he had been very discouraged by the outcome of the ’04 election. He told me this story and said we needed to do something. the only thing we had a consensus about was that there was a problem.

Working primarily, but far from solely, with the Department of Defense, a diverse group of government officials and screen writers, industry business developers, think tank intellectuals, energy professionals and environmental activists began a series of informal and private soiree discussions which formalized into a non-profit called The Energy Consensus, the only thing we had a consensus about was that there was a problem.

We met at my house (which gives it a different feel than if we met in a restaurant or office. We bring in speakers and experts, striving to reduce our individual and group energy illiteracy. We strive to bring cross-discipline, inter-organizational perspectives into the discussions, seeking to find ways of interacting across traditional stove-pipes in identifying problems and potential solution paths. We have people who are working together on innovative technologies. Others are striving to develop children’s books.
Others are fostering interacting on new ways of explaining and exploring challenges that we face.

As part of the group, we have about 150 people involved in a list serve discussion which has, at times, had influence on government discussion. For example, one of our members, the screenwriter Nora Maccoby, had an engaging conversation with then Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld at a party on Dec 14th, 2005. The secretary asked her to come back to see him. That evening Rumsfeld sent his first snowflake about energy to his Deputy and two under secretaries asking what DOD was doing about energy conservation and was energy in the quadrennial defense review? (A report required by congress every four years, to look into the future.)

Nora called to tell me about her invitation from the Secretary and I suggested that we ought to figure out what she might want to say and if she wanted to take anyone with her on this call. So I sent an email to our yahoo list with the question, “if you had 15 minutes with the SecDef, what would you want to tell him about energy?”

With in 48 hours I had received a rich, diverse, and impassioned set of suggestions. When put all together, it was 15 pages single spaced. The senior information person, at Defense, and a part of our group, took some of the suggestions and sent it out to his email list saying, this is important. We need to do something about it. In the NY Post, Jan 20, 2006 that Nora’s encounter with the SecDef that is credited with getting into President Bush’s 2006 State of the union speech the words. “we have a problem, the nation is addicted to oil.”

Once the President made energy a subject the rest of us could talk about many things started to happen.

At the time, I was working for the Office of force Transformation (you can’t FORCE transformation, but that was the office title.)

I was able to get the office to fund a monthly lecture series funded called Energy: A Conversation About Our Nation Addiction. We are now partnered with 26 different Federal departments and agencies. We cover the waterfront of issues with speakers like Amory Lovins, Jim Woolsey, Wal-Mart executives, Lester Brown, Better Place, and a host of other people for engagement in a diverse discussion space of the interacting and integrated challenges of energy, water, climate change, nuclear, hydro, etc., etc., etc...

And it is a Conversation. Our motto is: “Listen. Learn. Connect. Share. Collaborate.” The Energy Conversation serves as a catalyst for creating a collaborative, a safe space to build a networked community of Energy Smart advocates to inform, educate and communicate with each other, their families, their home institutions, with the American people on how to build a sustainable energy future.

In short order, after the State of the Union, a Defense Science Board on Energy Security
was announced to look at energy and national security. A number of other tasks within the Office of the Secretary of Defense on energy policy issues that have helped moved the Department toward more sensible energy policies even under the Bush-Cheney Administration.

I am into building interdisciplinary communities to address VERY complex issues. I want people to get to know one another. So, I do not think that we can overestimate the value of name tags in LARGE readable print in meeting environments for breaking the ice and facilitating discussion.

Of as much, or even more value as the presentations at our monthly meetings are the conversations and connections created through the round-tables and discussions that are sparked before, during, and after the presentations.

I know that it has been a good session when there are business cards being passed around and, when walking by groups, I hear “I am so glad that we met.” I believe that we are achieving something when I get feedback from people who say, they would never met these folks and never had a chance to collaborate on some new project without the environment of the Energy Conversation.

We will not navigate our way through the Perfect Storm with business as usual. Technology will provide us some Silver BBs. Financial mechanisms can assist with Silver BBs. Government Policy and better energy standards are critical for enabling and fostering Silver BBs and their implication. Political change is critical to enabling navigating a safe path. But, we must find our way to social and cultural change as well.

The Energy Consensus and Energy Conversation won’t solve our energy challenges, won’t turn back the tides of Climate Changing rising seas. They are not, somehow, a magical Silver Bullet. But efforts like these, which strive to put people together, to inform, to break stove-pipes, to create environments where innovative solutions might emerge and find paths for implementation could represent a tool for hastening necessary social and cultural changes.

But, the challenges are not to be dismissed or discounted. The risks we face in this Perfect Storm cannot be overstated. Let me be clear, I am dedicated to helping provide solution paths to addressing the most complex problems humankind has ever faced – having a planet we can all live on.

While my survival is likely not at stake, but your future prospects and the prospects for my, your, our children; for my, your, our grandchildren certainly is. And, those prospects will be brightened if we can speed the necessary social and cultural changes.

My name is Mitzi. I am a Petro-Holic. But I know people who are helping me and others fight our addiction.
My name is Mitzi. I am Energy Illiterate. But I know people who are helping me and others achieve literacy.

My name is Mitzi. I suffer from Short-Termitis. But, people are helping me and others see the long-term and work toward it.

My name is Mitzi and I am afflicted with Stove-Pipeitis. But, people are working with me and others to make the connections and break through the pipes.

My name is Mitzi. I am a connector. And, connecting people, organizations, and institutions is my role in helping to foster and hasten the social and cultural changes that will enable us to move toward a prosperous and climate-friendly future.