

(December 18, 2007) Statement on Passage of H.R. 6, the Energy Independence and Security Act

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U.S. House of Representatives

H.R. 6, the Energy Independence and Security Act of 2007

December 18, 2007

Today is an historic day, as America takes a big step forward in combating global climate change and breaking the grip that "Big Oil" companies and OPEC have on our nation. That is why I am pleased to rise in support of H.R. 6, the Energy Independence and Security Act of 2007 - a bill that will put us on a path to energy independence, while creating millions of new jobs and addressing climate change.

America has always been at the forefront of technological breakthroughs. We have responded to great challenges, perhaps most famously President John F. Kennedy's challenge to land a man on the moon before the end of the 1960s. I am confident that this legislation will provide America with the momentum it needs to move our country into a new energy economy.

Unfortunately, I am disappointed that the other body was unable to retain the House-passed language to repeal tax breaks for the oil and gas industry. Especially at a time of record high gas prices and record high corporate profits, this excessively prosperous industry should be paying its fare share. This revenue is needed to fund clean, renewable energies like wind, solar, and geothermal, as well as other important advanced technologies like plug-in electric vehicles, that will speed our path to energy independence. I will continue this fight against "Big Oil" and work to break the death grip that they have on American consumers. And I will continue to push for billions of dollars in tax incentives to jumpstart our cutting-edge renewable energy industries.

I am also not happy with the removal of the Renewable Electricity Standard from the final bill. This provision, which would have required utilities to generate 15 percent of electricity from renewable sources by 2020, would have gone a very long way in reducing America's addiction to fossil fuels. With most states already pursuing renewable electricity portfolios, including an Illinois mandate of 25 percent by 2025, I will work to make sure Congress addresses this issue soon.

As Vice-Chairman of the Science and Technology Committee I am pleased to have played an important role in not only getting this bill passed, but also in contributing two important provisions. The H-Prize Act of 2007, a bill I introduced with Rep. Inglis of South Carolina, establishes over \$50 million in competitively awarded cash prizes to spur innovations that advance the use of hydrogen as a fuel for transportation. While hydrogen-fueled cars already exist, there are significant technical and economic barriers that must still be overcome before we can put a hydrogen car in every American garage. The H-Prize will help expand the possibilities of hydrogen research, promoting people not normally involved in federal research and development to explore one of the greatest challenges facing us today. And when these advances are made, hydrogen can fill critical energy needs beyond transportation. Hydrogen will also be used to provide heat and generate electricity. The future possibilities for this energy source are huge. And most importantly, hydrogen will be a clean, domestic energy source, producing no emissions besides water.

I am also very happy about the inclusion of the BRIGHT (Bulb Replacement In Government with High-efficiency Technology) Energy Savings Act which I introduced and shepherded through the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee. This provision requires the federal government - the nation's largest energy consumer - to use high efficiency light bulbs in 1,800 civilian office buildings. This change will significantly reduce energy consumption - about 75 percent savings for each of more than 3 million bulbs - saving tens of million of taxpayer dollars, in addition to saving energy and cutting down on the emissions of greenhouse gases.

I ask my colleagues to join me in supporting this groundbreaking legislation. This is not a perfect bill, and I will work to make sure we revisit this issue, especially the repeal of the taxes on "Big Oil." But this is a great step forward for America and for our environment. I am confident that one day we will look back on this bill as that catalyst that led to a better, cleaner, more secure America and world.