

outside the region in which it currently operates.

CONFERENCE REPORT ON H.R. 6,
ENERGY POLICY ACT OF 2003

SPEECH OF

HON. MAX SANDLIN

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, November 18, 2003

Mr. SANDLIN. Mr. Speaker, I rise to express my support for the long-overdue energy conference report, while at the same time sharing my disappointment with the process by which the House leadership has brought this legislation to the floor.

As we all know, one of the greatest problems facing the United States today is our lack of national energy independence. The United States' dependence upon foreign sources of oil is simply unacceptable for a country rich in natural resources and equipped with the capability to develop these resources as a means of increasing our national security. At the height of the energy crisis during the 1970s, the United States imported 46 percent of our oil supply. Today, it is estimated that we import approximately 55 percent of all energy used in this country. As America's energy consumption increases, our need to produce more energy rises as well. Unfortunately, supply is not meeting demand, and our increased reliance on foreign sources of energy has potentially disastrous consequences for our economy and national security. The energy conference report contains significant incentives for the exploration and production of oil and gas and represents an important step toward increasing our national energy independence.

At the same time, energy independence cannot be attained through production alone. Though Congress should strongly encourage the production of energy sources such as oil, gas, and nuclear power, Congress should also incentivize businesses and consumers to produce energy with wind and solar power and conserve energy through innovative technologies.

When used effectively, the Internal Revenue Code ["the Code"] can help to stimulate both the production and conservation of energy. Provisions in the Code such as section 29 and section 45 have stimulated the production of nonconventional fuels and wind energy, respectively, and the tax title of the energy conference report will extend these credits and encourage continued production from these sources for years to come.

Further, the report's funding authorizations and tax incentives for investment in clean coal technology will benefit both consumers and the environment in the state of Texas. Texas consumes more coal for electricity generation than any other state in the country, with a significant amount of that coal mined in Texas. Unfortunately, while generation facilities must burn coal to provide the electricity that so many people take for granted, burning coal inevitably releases some pollutants into our atmosphere. Together with private industry, the Department of Energy's clean coal technology program is working to develop cleaner-burning technologies that will decrease emissions of nitrogen dioxide, sulfur dioxide, and other airborne pollutants.

Additionally, I am pleased that the conference report seeks to decrease our over-reliance on foreign sources of oil by repealing the current sunsets for the qualified electric vehicle credit and clean fuel vehicles deductions. Further, I appreciate the inclusion of a credit for the purchase of hydrogen fuel cell motor vehicles. I included a similar provision in my energy tax legislation, H.R. 1436, the Energy Independence and Security Act, and believe strongly that fuel cell technology holds enormous potential for the future. The federal government has an important role to play in the development and use of this clean, renewable energy source.

Any balanced energy plan must acknowledge that Americans need to increase our conservation efforts in an attempt to move closer to energy independence. To that end, I appreciate the inclusion of incentives to homeowners to make energy efficient home improvements that decrease their consumption of energy.

As well, the energy conference report's increased funding authorization for the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program [LIHEAP] will directly benefit low-income Texans in my district who rely on LIHEAP aid to pay their utility bills. Last year, Texans received \$50.1 million through this federal grant program, and this legislation should increase the amount of federal aid that Texas receives in the future.

Further, I believe that the electricity provisions contained within the conference report will encourage the improvement of our country's transmission infrastructure by reducing the depreciable lives for transmission assets from twenty to fifteen years. Accelerating the depreciation period will provide additional resources for electric utilities to modernize their transmission systems, which should increase the reliability, safety, and security of the national grid system.

I am, however, extremely disappointed with the process by which the Republican leadership has brought this measure to the floor. It is well known by now that the Republican leadership and energy conferees in both Houses drafted the conference report without Democratic participation. Democratic legislators who, in some cases, have been involved in drafting complex energy legislation for several decades were prohibited from taking part in this process. Mr. Speaker, the Republicans' behavior throughout this process has been outrageous and inexcusable, and their actions demonstrate a contempt both for the democratic process and the constituents of the legislators who have been denied a voice over the past several months.

SUPPORTING POISON PREVENTION
AND CONTROL CENTERS

HON. RAHM EMANUEL

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, November 21, 2003

Mr. EMANUEL. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of S. 686, which strengthens poison prevention in America and guarantees funding for our nation's 74 poison control, information and treatment centers. Each year these centers save countless lives, and it is critical that we ensure the financial stability

and public awareness they need to best serve the American people.

As our nation's primary line of defense against poison-related injuries and deaths, these centers provide physicians and the general public with direct access to life-saving information. Health care professionals rely on these centers for immediate, around-the-clock assessments and treatment recommendations for many types of poisonings, overdoses and drug interactions affecting people of all ages. Parents who find their child has consumed a toxic substance can receive immediate professional help with one phone call, any time, day or night.

Over 90 percent of all accidental poisonings take place in the home. More than 50 percent of these accidents involve children under the age of six, with more than one million young children exposed to toxins annually. When a child's life is potentially in danger, parents need to know immediately where to go for help. Too often parents are unaware of the services provided by poison control centers and turn to costly and time-consuming options such as rushing to emergency rooms at distant hospitals. In response to this situation, this bill provides for both a nationwide toll free number connected to local poison control centers, and a new media campaign to call the public's attention to services available through this number.

My home state of Illinois is served by the nation's oldest poison control, information and treatment center, the Illinois Poison Center. The IPC has expertly served the needs of metropolitan Chicago since 1953, and handles approximately 100,000 cases throughout the state of Illinois each year. In 1985, my state was served by five regional poison control centers, but only IPC remains after deep budget cuts over the years. We must ensure that our nation's remaining centers receive the support they need to continue serving the public.

Our nation's Poison Control and Information Centers also play a vital role in managing public health crises, environmental disasters, and the threat of weapons of mass destruction. In July of 2000, the Illinois Poison Center was the first to respond to a nitric acid leak at a Chicago factory. In December of that same year, the IPC was again the first to respond, this time to an anthrax threat at the British-American Chamber of Commerce in Chicago. And, in August of 2001, the IPC responded to a toxic chemical spill on the Dan Ryan Expressway.

The Illinois Poison Center has developed protocols for response and notification of proper governmental agencies when these events occur, and it is also a participant in regional disaster drills throughout the metropolitan Chicago area. Poison control and information centers like the IPC are a critical part of our nation's emergency response and disaster preparedness systems.

Poison centers represent a cost effective investment that benefits the public health. In 1998, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services estimated that every dollar spent on a poison center saves seven dollars in unnecessary medical costs.

Mr. Speaker, I commend our colleagues on both sides of the aisle for their hard work on this legislation. This bill is good for the health, safety and security of the American people. I strongly encourage my colleagues to vote for S. 686.