

April 28, 2006

Dear Friend:

As gas prices continue to rise across the nation, it is becoming increasingly clear that Congress must take a proactive approach to address a looming energy crisis. The high petroleum prices, potential future shortages, and our dependence on foreign oil demand the immediate attention of policy-makers. Congress has been irresponsibly slow to address these issues, and it is time to change our approach to energy. During the 109th Congress, I have introduced a series of bills designed to put in place both short-term and long-term solutions to our unsustainable national dependence on nonrenewable resources.

According to an analysis by the Environmental Working Group, U.S. families will pay nearly \$1,800 more on average for gasoline this year than they were paying in February, 2003, on the eve of the Iraq War. Families will pay even more if prices continue to rise as expected. In inflation-adjusted dollars, today's prices at the pump will soon surpass prices we saw during the oil shortages of twenty-five years ago. To bring immediate relief to American families, I introduced H.R. 4010, The Low Income Gasoline Assistance Program (LIGAP), a bill modeled after the successful LIHEAP program that helps seniors and the disadvantaged pay for heating oil and air conditioning. The LIGAP bill calls for qualifying recipients to receive \$25-\$75 per month for three months to pay for gasoline if prices where they live remain high. If the price of gasoline does not fall back below the program's trigger price, recipients will be allowed to reapply for another three months' benefit.

Although ever-climbing oil prices need to be addressed immediately, costs will not level off if long-term national energy provisions are not put in place. A long-term national energy policy must include a realistic outlook on our access to non-renewable resources, incentives for developing renewable and clean energy, and guidelines for addressing environmental consequences of high energy consumption. I have introduced several bills that mobilize these three important components of sound energy policy.

On November 2, 2005, I introduced H.Res.507, the bipartisan 'Peak Oil' Resolution, which expresses the sense of the House of Representatives that the United States, in collaboration with other international allies, should establish an energy project with the magnitude, creativity, and sense of urgency that was incorporated in the "man on the Moon project" to address the inevitable challenges of a peak in oil production. The introduction of this bill and the concurrent creation of the Peak Oil Caucus, which Roscoe Bartlett (R-MD) and I started, will allow Congress to gain an accurate perspective of our access to petroleum resources.

On March 22, 2005, I introduced H.R. 983, the Renewable Portfolio Standard Act, which would establish a Federal renewable energy portfolio standard for certain retail electric utilities. In order to further increase our renewable energy portfolio and increase our national energy independence, I also co-sponsored H.R. 4623, the Clean Alternatives for Energy Independence. This bill would repeal tax subsidies for oil and gas and divert the proceeds to incentives for alternative energy such as hybrid technology. If passed, both of these bills would put the U.S. on the path towards energy stability.

While these bills address our long-term energy needs, Congress must further commit to mitigating the negative environmental effects of our high national energy consumption. To this end, I introduced H.R. 5049, the Keep America Competitive Global Warming Policy Act of 2006. This is a bipartisan market-based approach to mitigation of the harmful effects of global warming that spurs innovation so that America can maintain its role as leader in global technology, and maintain strong competitiveness in international markets. H.R. 5049 will help to ensure that our long-term energy policy includes environmental considerations that protect national and international stability.

It is time for Congress to become proactive on energy and take steps to mitigate the dangerous threats that our incomplete energy policies have produced. With a policy that includes accurate perspectives on non-renewable resources, provisions for increasing energy independence, incentives for expanding our renewable energy portfolio, and standards for environmental protection, in addition to immediate relief for high energy prices, our nation will be able to confront any energy crisis with solid strategies. Practical Legislation coupled with a concerted focus on conservation, higher fuel efficiency standards, energy saving buildings and appliances, revival of passenger and freight rail, expanded research into and use of biofuels – will make the difference.

For more information on my approach to energy policy, please see <http://tomudall.house.gov/display2.cfm?id=5798&type=Issues>.

Very Truly Yours,

Tom Udall
Member of Congress