

Washington, D.C. - The dramatic increase in gasoline prices over the last several months has raised awareness of the pressing need to develop alternative energy sources to reduce our dependence on foreign oil in the United States. The threat of global warming and the harmful effects of other air pollutants should lead us to change the way we use other fossil fuels, as well. The answer is to invest much more heavily in the development and use of alternative energy technologies and improved energy efficiency.

I am an original cosponsor of a comprehensive Democratic energy independence bill, the PROGRESS Act (H.R. 5965). The centerpiece of this legislation is a new initiative to expand federal research for hydrogen and fuel cell technology. In addition, the bill would launch a program to establish a nationwide network of infrastructure for the use of biofuels, authorize funding for transit development, and require the government to be a leader in using alternative fuels. I believe this legislation is critical to ensuring our nation's energy independence and economic security.

Unfortunately, Congress passed up an important opportunity to significantly address our energy challenges when it approved the Energy Policy Act (H.R. 6) last year. Although the bill contained some forward-thinking provisions, it did not strike an acceptable balance between increased fossil energy production and the need to promote alternative and renewable energy development and increased energy efficiency. In addition, H.R. 6 provided billions of dollars in new tax breaks and subsidies for oil and gas companies, which are already making record profits.

I will continue working to make our country energy-independent and to reduce our dependence on fossil fuels.

###