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Lowering Energy Prices

This week, the House will consider comprehensive energy legislation aimed at lowering energy prices and expanding domestic and renewable energy sources.

The “Comprehensive American Energy Security and Consumer Protection Act” would end subsidies to oil companies, promote good jobs here in America and require oil companies to pay what is owed to American taxpayers.

This legislative package would help move America along the path toward energy independence through greater efficiency and conservation, and it would protect consumers through with strong actions that would lower prices at the pump.

In order to help lower gas prices immediately, the bill would require temporarily releasing about 10 percent of the oil from the government’s stockpile, known as the Strategic Petroleum Reserve (SPR), and later replacing it with heavier, cheaper crude oil.

History shows that this is only proven way to reduce oil prices in the short term. In 1991, former President Bush released oil from the SPR and oil prices dropped by over 33% in just one day – the largest one-day price drop ever. Releasing SPR oil also pushed down oil prices in 2000 and again in 2005.

The bill also provides major investments in developing alternative energies, which would, in turn, spur the creation of jobs and reduce America’s dependence on oil. Specifically, the bill would extend tax credits for the development of power derived from fuel cells, solar, wind, biomass, geothermal, water and landfills.

The legislation also incorporates a “Use It or Lose It” approach when it comes to gas and oil companies’ leases on public lands, and mandates annual lease sales in the National Petroleum Reserve in Alaska (NPR-A) to speed development and oil production.

Other provisions include banning the export of Alaskan oil outside the U.S., calling on the Bush Administration to facilitate completion of the NPR-A oil pipeline and construction of the Alaska Natural Gas Pipeline, which could create up to 100,000 jobs.

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I have some concerns about the expanding natural gas and oil drilling all along the Outer Continental Shelf (OCS), including the waters off North Carolina’s shore. Under this plan, states could opt to permit drilling 50 to 100 miles offshore. The remaining OCS beyond 100 miles offshore would be open to oil and gas leasing.

We have seen tremendous economic growth by North Carolina’s coastal communities and it imperative that we protect this vital component of our region’s economy and character. I also have deep concerns that the bill fails to include any drilling revenue-sharing for states.

Another provision includes requiring service stations owned by major integrated oil companies to install at least one “alternative fuel pump” – such as natural gas or E-85. The bill also includes funding to expand public transportation and reduce transit fares, and would close a tax loophole that allows big oil and gas companies operating overseas to game the system by understating their foreign oil and gas extraction income.

This bill will continue the efforts to lower energy prices and increase America’s energy independence. Last year, Congress passed and the President signed historic energy legislation with provisions to combat oil market manipulation, increase vehicle fuel efficiency to 35 miles per gallon in 2020 – the first Congressional increase in more than three decades – and promote the use of more affordable American biofuels.

House Observes 7th Anniversary 9/11 Attacks

Last week the House unanimously approved a bipartisan resolution commemorating September 11, 2001.

The House extended its deepest condolences to the friends, families and loved ones of the innocent victims of the terrorist attacks. The resolution honored the heroic service, actions and sacrifices of first responders, law enforcement personnel, state and local officials, volunteers and others who aided the innocent victims.

The resolution also expressed gratitude to the foreign leaders and citizens of all nations who have assisted and continue to stand in solidarity with the United States against terrorism in the aftermath of the attacks.

The resolution recognized the heroic service, actions, and sacrifices of United States personnel, including members of the armed forces, intelligence agencies, diplomatic service, and their families, who have sacrificed much, including their lives and health, in defense of their country against terrorists and their supporters.

The bill also reaffirmed that the American people will never forget the sacrifices made on and since September 11, 2001, and included a vow to defeat those who attacked our Nation through our shared determination, spirit and embrace of democratic values.

Recognizing Norman L. Mebane, Jr.

Last week Elizabeth City State University held a special ceremony to recognize and honor a member of its Board of Trustees.

ECSU named the road connecting Weeksville Road to the university’s Fine Arts Center as “N.L. Mebane Drive,” in honor of Bertie County resident Mr. Norman L. Mebane, Jr.

I was unable to attend the ceremony because the House was in session, but the following statement was entered into the Congressional Record:

Madame Speaker, Mr. Norman L. Mebane Jr. was born in Merry Hill, North Carolina. He graduated from high school in Bertie County before earning an Associate’s degree from Pitt Community College. After two years of honorable service in the U.S. Army, Mr. Mebane returned home and worked at the Newport News Shipbuilding and Dry Dock Company.

He attended Thomas Nelson Community College, and then earned a Bachelor of Science degree from St. Augustine’s College where he was also inducted into Alpha Kappa Mu Honor Society and received special recognition as a Presidential Scholar.

Mr. Mebane then worked as a crop and livestock farmer before moving on to the trucking business. He founded N.L. Mebane Trucking Company, Inc. and later founded Mebane Rural Initiative Institute, Inc. and Mebane Investment Properties LLC. His entrepreneurial successes were recognized by North Carolina Department of Transportation with the Minority Business Enterprise Award of the Year.

Mr. Mebane currently serves on the RBC Centura Bank Region II Advisory Board and the Economic Development Council, and he previously served as part of the Historical Hope Foundation, Transportation Development Council, North Carolina Governor’s Conference on Small Business and the North Carolina Department of Transportation’s Minority Business Expansion Council. Mr. Mebane also serves as a Board Trustee for Elizabeth City State University and Martin County Community College.

It is certainly fitting that Elizabeth City State University would honor Mr. Mebane because he fully understands the importance of community involvement and he truly dedicates himself to serving others. He is an outstanding member of our community who deserves our highest thanks and praise.

I ask my colleagues to join me in honoring this great North Carolinian and American, Mr. Norman L. Mebane, Jr.

Thank you, Madame Speaker.

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