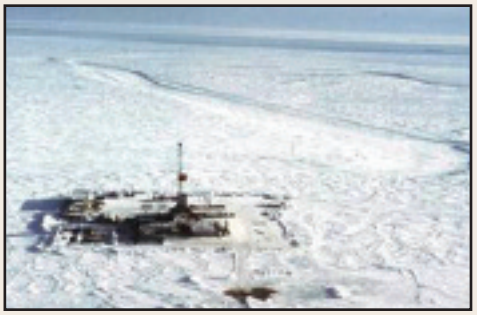
Improving Energy Independence

Every year we pay higher prices for energy consumption – whether at the pumps or in our monthly home energy bills. This has stifled economic development and placed an unnecessary burden on the family budget. America needs a coherent energy policy that stimulates growth, while providing security for all. Our immediate inclination is to blame the energy companies or blame the government for not fixing the situation. While some responsibility lies with the government, it is not the main reason why we are paying higher prices.

Unfortunately, the lack of infrastructure investment can be traced back to the nature of a vocal minority here in the United States. They perpetuate the myth that this country can produce enough energy from renewable sources to break our addiction to oil. Certainly, renewable energy should be a part of our overall energy portfolio, however we simply can not rely on it until significant technological advances are achieved.

In order to tackle this problem and begin the task of reducing America's reliance on foreign sources of energy, I have authored a bi-partisan bill, the American-Made Energy Freedom Act. This bill represents a comprehensive national energy policy that explores for resources in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR) and uses the revenue generated from ANWR leases and royalties to assist in developing alternative fuel sources, and bolster America's renewable energy portfolio. This nearly $40 billion investment over 30 years will ensure that America remains competitive far into the future.

Improvements and innovations in technologies enable us to produce energy and protect our environment at the same time. There are numerous common-sense avenues we can pursue to turn the tide on the current trend and return our nation to energy independence. For example, with the advent of technology, there is no reason why we should not invest in new nuclear facilities that produce environmentally friendly power. We can also look into other proven technologies that countries are currently using or have used in the past with success. One that has the most promise is Coal-to-Liquid (CTL) fuel production. The CTL fuels process begins with coal as a raw material which is put through one of two processes – indirect or direct. Both processes convert the coal into a synthetic crude oil that can then be refined into a variety of fuel products. These fuels then burn more efficiently and produce emissions that are significantly lower than low-sulfur diesel.



Coastal Plain of ANWR

While we find new environmentally sensitive ways to expand traditional energy resources, we also must look toward non-traditional resources that have the potential to yield unprecedented amounts of energy.

One of those non-traditional resources is oil shale, which is prevalent in western states. Another source is ethanol, more specifically cellulosic ethanol.

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Possible Energy Solutions

- Today, nuclear power accounts for 20% of our electricity needs. Considering that the French, who are known to be strong environmentalists, rely on nuclear power for 78% of their needs, now is the time to follow their lead to ensure we remain economically competitive.
- The potential amount of oil contained in American oil shale deposits is estimated to be the equivalent of 1.8 trillion barrels of oil. This amount can power the United States for years to come.

Medicare Prescription Drug Sign-up a Huge Success

Thanks to large outreach efforts by Congress, approximately 39 million seniors are now receiving free or reduced prices for their prescription drugs. In Tulare and parts of Fresno counties, over 62,000 folks are now signed up to receive this new benefit. I was pleased to be one of the authors of this landmark bill and believe that it will provide our nation's seniors with the help and support they need.