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**LARRY CRAIG**

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**NEWS RELEASE**

For Immediate Release  
March 8, 2006

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## **CRAIG VOTES TO SECURE ENERGY INDEPENDENCE**

**Bills approved by Energy Committee to boost production, education opportunities**

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Idaho Senator Larry Craig today helped secure approval by the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee of two bills that will help improve U.S. energy independence in the near and long term.

S.2197, Protecting America's Competitive Edge through Energy Act of 2006 (PACE-Energy Act), would boost math and science education programs in the United States, by doubling funding to the Department of Energy's (DOE) Office of Science over seven years, and providing Early-Career Research Grants that support young, promising scientists and engineers at the beginning of their careers.

The PACE-Energy Act also would support hands-on learning opportunities like internships at national laboratories, universities and technology-based companies, and provide for national laboratories to host, in collaboration with universities, summer institutes to train thousands of K-12 math and science teachers on best practices for promoting math and science skills.

An amendment proposed by Senator Craig, and supported by Senators Domenici and Bingaman, both of New Mexico, was subsequently adopted to address the decline of nuclear science education in the United States by directing DOE to:

- Provide significant grant assistance to universities for the purpose of establishing new academic programs in nuclear science, with the goal of increasing the number of graduates in the field;
- Grant merit-based scholarships to students studying in the fields of nuclear science, nuclear engineering, nuclear chemistry, radio chemistry and health physics; and
- Provide grants to existing university nuclear science programs for the purposes of improving laboratory, instrumentation, and other hands-on learning resources, and for recruiting new faculty.

**“I'm proud to say that the PACE-Energy Act encourages the kind of cooperation in nuclear science programs already taking place between three of our Idaho universities and the Idaho National Laboratory,”** Craig said. **“If America wants to remain competitive in the future, we must ensure that our children have the education to keep us on the cutting edge of science and technology, and this bill will help do that.”**

Ann Nalley, President of the American Chemical Society, said “The continued economic leadership of our nation depends on maintaining our global technological leadership in fields like

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nuclear science. Our competitive edge is clearly being threatened in this critical discipline and we commend Senator Craig’s leadership in crafting a bi-partisan provision that will bolster the education of the next generation of nuclear scientists.”

In addition to the PACE-Energy Act, the committee also approved S.2253, of which Craig is a cosponsor. The bill would authorize oil and natural gas development in an area off Florida’s Gulf Coast known as Lease Area 181. Lease sales in this area would bring 5 trillion cubic feet of natural gas into the market, enough to heat and cool nearly 5 million homes for 15 years. Estimates also show there are 930 million barrels of undiscovered oil in this region.

**“People across the country have been letting their leaders know that energy prices are too high, and Congress appears to finally have gotten the message,”** Craig said. **“As I’ve said for years, America must get back in the business of producing energy, and this lease sale is a step in the right direction. Bringing supplies online like this will help bring natural gas prices down.”**

The two bills, S.2197 and S.2253, now go to the full Senate for approval.