

The American Energy Independence Act

The Cardin American Energy Independence Act will deliver energy independence to Americans, increase the efficiency and decrease the environmental impact of America's energy policy, increase America's research and development in energy, and encourage the development and use of renewable forms of energy.

Title I – An Energy Plan that Changes with Innovations

Achieving Energy Independence by 2016 – The Cardin bill will set a Congressional goal of achieving energy independence by 2016. “Energy independence” is defined as meeting all but 10 percent of our energy needs from domestic energy sources. The bill will also set a Congressional goal of achieving independence from fossil fuels.

Blue Ribbon Energy Commission – The Cardin bill will create a Blue Ribbon Energy Commission, which will meet every 2 years starting in 2008, to evaluate our progress in efforts to become energy independent and the impact of provisions in this bill, and to recommend changes to be made in reports to Congress.

Title II – Increasing Efficiency for American Consumers and Businesses

Increasing Automobile Average Fuel Economy Standards – The Cardin bill will increase Corporate Average Fuel Efficiency (CAFÉ) standards significantly over the next ten years, to 45 mpg by 2016. The bill will also include large SUVs and light trucks into these standards so that vehicles sold as passenger cars will abide by the same efficiency rules. The Ford Model T got 25 mpg, according to the Sierra Club, yet our current CAFÉ standard calls for 27.5 mpg for passenger cars, and 21.6 mpg for light trucks. “In 1981, the last time gas prices breached \$3, adjusted for inflation, the average car got 21 miles to the gallon. Jump ahead 24 years, a period when there have been huge advances in automotive fuel-efficiency, and the average passenger vehicle on the road gets...21 miles to the gallon.” – CNN 9/14/05

Increasing Energy Star Funding – The Energy Star program brings consumers energy efficient choices in appliances, light bulbs, and other goods. This vital program helped Americans save enough energy in 2005 to prevent greenhouse gas emissions equivalent to 23 million cars – while saving \$12 billion on utility bills. The Cardin bill will increase Energy Star funding, and add solar water heaters to the list of products that wear the Energy Star label.

Creating Fuel Efficiency Standards for Replacement Tires – Under federal fuel-economy standards, automakers equip new vehicles with tires that have a lower rolling resistance, which leads to higher fuel efficiency. By requiring replacement tires to be as efficient as new car tires, the Cardin bill will rapidly begin gasoline savings, and will save more than 7 billion barrels of oil over the next 50 years. These changes would particularly aid lower-income drivers, who are more likely to drive used cars with replacement tires.

Broadening Appliance Efficiency Standards – The Cardin bill would add federal efficiency standards for household appliances, so that Americans have better choices available on the market.

Increasing the Energy Efficient Commercial Buildings Deduction – According to the DOE, commercial buildings account for 35% of America’s electricity consumption. An upfront investment of 2% in green building design, on average, results in life cycle savings of ten times that upfront investment. The Cardin bill encourages business owners to look forward and plan ahead by using buildings that will save money and electricity over the long run.

Title III – Encouraging the Development and Availability of Renewable Energy

Creating a Federal Renewable Portfolio Standard – The Cardin bill creates a federal standard that ensures consumer access to renewable energy, by requiring electric utilities to get a portion (25% by 2020) of the energy they provide to Americans from renewable sources.

Creating Electricity Transmission Lines Designed to Carry Electricity from Renewable Sources – The Cardin bill will ensure that we have the capacity to move renewable energy across the country.

Extending the Renewable Energy Production Credit – The Cardin bill will extend this important credit through 2017, providing long-term incentives to increase infrastructural investment in the production of renewable energy.

Providing Net Metering for All Americans – Net metering helps level the playing field by eliminating penalties for people and businesses who generate their own renewable power (with, for instance, rooftop solar systems) It allows customers who produce more electricity than they are using at a given moment to feed the surplus back to the utility and only pay for net electricity used over an entire billing period.

Providing Loan Guarantees for Biorefineries and Renewable Energy Production Facilities – Creating renewable energy infrastructure requires a great deal of up-front capital, and the Cardin bill will create a safety net by guaranteeing the loans of approved production facilities.

Title IV – Increasing the Renewable Energy Use and Energy Efficiency of the Federal Government

Increasing Federal Energy Efficiency – The Cardin bill will set a standard that the Federal government should lead the country in energy efficiency.

Meeting Green Building Standards for Federal Buildings – The Cardin bill will require new federal buildings to live up to green building LEED (Leadership and Energy in Environmental Design) standards, set by the United States Green Building Council. Energy used in buildings in FY 2002 accounted for 38% of the total Federal energy bill. Total Federal buildings and facilities energy expenditures in FY 2002 were \$3.73 billion. This federal investment in green building will save the treasury millions while reducing overall electricity consumption.

Increasing Federal Renewable and Clean Energy Use – The Cardin bill will require that at least 20 percent of the electricity consumed by non-defense activities of the Federal Government will be generated from renewable sources or zero-emission fossil fuel energy sources by 2016.

Increasing the Fuel Economy of the Federal Vehicle Fleet – Transportation costs accounted for 58% of federal energy consumption in FY 2002. The Cardin bill will decrease federal energy costs by both requiring that the federal fleet exceed CAFÉ standards and requiring that at least 10 percent of the motor vehicles purchased by an Executive agency in any fiscal year will be high-efficiency vehicles or hybrid electric vehicles

Title V – Increasing American Energy Research and Development – The Cardin bill will implement many of the changes suggested by the National Academy of Sciences’ Report, *Rising Above a Gathering Storm* – to ensure U.S. competitiveness in research and scientific development, including marked increases in The Department of Energy’s R&D funding. These provisions include:

Authorizing Appropriations for the Department of Energy for Basic Research

Providing Funding for Math, Science, and Engineering Education at the DOE

Creating DOE Early-Career Research Grants

Creating Advanced Energy Research Projects

Title VI – Increasing Federal Commitments to Energy Efficiency

Creating Transit-Oriented Development Corridors – The Cardin bill will encourage smart growth through funding transit-oriented development corridors with upgrades in transit facilities, bicycle transportation facilities, and pedestrian walkways.

Increasing Funding for Weatherization Assistance – The Cardin bill will promote energy efficiency in all communities by increasing funding for weatherization assistance. In the 27 years since its founding, DOE’s Weatherization Assistance Program has served over 5.3 million low-income families. Low-income families spend an average of 14 percent of their annual income on energy costs, while other households spend only 3.5 percent. Weatherization reduces greenhouse gas emissions by one ton per weatherized home, and decreases U.S. energy consumption by the equivalent of 15 million barrels of oil every year.

Providing Federal Support for Commercialization of New Technologies – The Cardin bill will establish a program of grants, low-interest loans, and loan guarantees for the commercialization of new renewable energy and energy efficiency technologies.

Incentives for Telecommuting – The Cardin bill will create federal tax incentives for employers who provide telecommuting to their employees. Telecommuting has successfully reduced both transportation and energy use, and the EPA reports that if just 10 percent of the nation’s workforce telecommuted just one day a week, Americans would conserve more than 1.2 million gallons of fuel per week.