

Energy

The recent flux in energy prices posed significant challenges for Kansas. Although energy prices have moderated from recent highs in the summer of 2008, most Kansans know that higher prices could easily return. The burden of higher gas prices is particularly troubling in rural Kansas where we often travel long distances for necessary activities such as work and school. Higher energy prices increase the operating costs for many businesses, including our manufacturing industry, truck drivers, farmers, and ranchers. Whether you're heating your home in the winter months, using irrigation to water crops, or producing, transporting, or using fertilizer, higher energy prices are detrimental to Kansans.

For the U.S. to remain competitive in a global market, we must adopt a comprehensive energy policy that allows an ample energy supply that is affordable, reliable, and environmentally responsible. As our population demands greater amounts of energy, it is time that Congress makes a strong commitment to develop a long-term energy policy. More than 60 percent of our oil is imported from foreign countries. While oil provides our country with many economic benefits, it is important that we continue to advance technologies to help reduce our dependence on domestic and foreign sources of oil.

No single form of energy can provide the answer that will allow production of sufficient amounts of domestic energy. To solve our nation's energy problem we must develop traditional sources of oil, natural gas, and coal; encourage development of renewable energy sources like biofuels and wind, solar, geothermal, and hydropower; expand use of nuclear energy; and promote conservation.

Congress took the initial step to open new areas for energy production off our coasts by

allowing the congressional ban on oil and natural gas exploration on the Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) to expire. I was proud to be a part of the effort that got this ban lifted. This policy must be preserved and Congress must encourage the President to pursue a sensible leasing strategy to develop the OCS and other federal lands.

We must also develop a long-term approach to expanding renewable energy. Our current system relies on a piecemeal set of tax incentives that often expire on a yearly basis. Businesses, including the energy generation industry, are developed based on long-term investment models. Congress needs to develop an integrated approach that will promote regulatory certainty and allow sustained investment in all forms of renewable energy.

Energy exploration must also be accompanied by energy conservation. We must find ways to drive more efficient vehicles and construct energy conserving buildings. I supported higher fuel efficiency standards for vehicles and initiatives to encourage energy-efficient buildings and appliances in the Energy Independence and Security Act of 2007. Congress must continue to look for opportunities to advance practical and cost-effective methods for Kansans to reduce energy use.