Making America Energy Independent

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Idaho (Mr. Otter) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. Otter. Madam Speaker, those of us lucky enough to live in Idaho and the Northwest are blessed. Besides the unmatched beauty and the incredible quality of life we enjoy, our rivers provide us with relatively abundant and affordable hydropower that gives us a competitive advantage in the world marketplace.

As residents of an arid State, my Idaho colleagues and I know better than to take it for granted. Yet despite being a Nation that depends too heavily on foreign sources of fossil fuels, America for too long has taken energy for granted.

We have gone a dozen years now without a national energy policy and, I'm afraid, that change is nowhere in sight.

As our economy recovers and picks up steam, it is more important than ever that the United States maintain an abundant and reliable energy supply; and, frankly, we are not going to achieve that unless we develop a comprehensive national energy policy already passed three times in this House.

While the recent rise in energy costs has caught many consumers by surprise, it is important to remember that the supply of reliable energy is at the heart of every major national security problem.

The bottom line is this: Without a comprehensive national energy policy, America is a nation at risk.

Congress must act decisively to send President Bush a blueprint for lowering natural gas prices, creating jobs, and making us more independent and secure. With only 18 months left, we must have a new generation of safe and efficient nuclear reactors that could further improve our energy independence.

Indeed, I am more optimistic than ever about the potential for nuclear power. One of the ways in which we can reverse the mistakes of the past decades and start down the right track toward a stable domestic energy marketplace is through the expanded use of clean nuclear energy.

Nuclear power stands out as an obvious answer to the many energy-related challenges we now face. Back home, the Idaho National Energy Engineering and Environmental Laboratory and the Argonne National Laboratory-West are already working on the next generation of nuclear reactors. Their vision for nuclear energy is one that will provide America's energy consumers with a cheap, reliable, environmentally friendly and inherently safe source of electricity as far into the future as the human mind can envision.

I believe that the Idaho labs are headed in the right direction, and I am committed to helping them achieve their mission to enhance our Nation's nuclear power capabilities. I want to share with Members just a few reasons why I believe in the potential for nuclear power.

First, nothing is burned in a nuclear reactor. And, there are no emissions into the atmosphere. In fact, nuclear energy is responsible for over 90 percent of reduction in the greenhouse gas emissions coming from the energy industry since 1973. Between 1973 and 1996, nuclear power accounted for emissions reductions of 34.6 million tons of nitrogen oxide and 80.2 million tons of sulfur dioxide, and over the past 10 years nuclear plants have produced over 5 trillion kilowatt-hours of electricity production, with absolutely zero carbon dioxide, sulfur dioxide or particulate matter emissions. Beyond those benefits, existing and emerging technologies will solve the complexities of storing and recycling spent nuclear fuels.

Second, nuclear power is a safe, reliable abundant source of power. Not only does the world contain plenty of resources for fueling nuclear reactors, but existing and emerging technologies will provide even greater efficiencies in the use of nuclear fuel.

Finally, nuclear energy is a home-grown technology. Thanks to the men and women who have worked in Idaho's labs over the past 5 decades, our Nation has long been the world leader in nuclear technology and continues to be the world's largest consumer of nuclear energy.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Ms. Ginny Brown-Waite). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. Defazio) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. Defazio. Addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)