

A Call to Face Climate Change Head On -- January 2007

The subject of climate change in Congress has shifted from a debate over whether or not it is happening to a debate over how best to address it. This is an extremely positive change of course and one that will serve future generations well. All we have to do is take a look around us -- increasing earth surface temperatures and increasing concentrations of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere are attributing to rising sea levels, changes in agricultural patterns and the marine food chain, and changes in the distribution of disease, among other things. Facing this problem head on is imperative and, if ignored, the impacts of fossil fuel use will affect the security of nations, national and global economies, environment and health. The time for action is now.

Throughout my time in Congress, I have advocated for forward-looking energy policies that will help address climate change by improving conservation methods, and by spurring investment in efficiency and renewable energy research and technology, to make it more affordable and widely available. In the 110th Congress, I have already supported legislation that recoups lost federal revenues through the repeal of nearly \$13 billion in subsidies and tax breaks to oil and gas companies by redirecting it to a research and development fund for renewable energy sources including solar and wind energy, alternative fuels like ethanol and biodiesel, efficiency efforts, and conservation incentives. I have also cosponsored The Climate Stewardship Act, which would establish a cap and trade system for greenhouse gas emissions, including carbon dioxide. Additionally, I support legislation to increase fuel efficiency to require our cars, SUVs, minivans and pickups to go further on a tank of gas.

While a national approach is critical, it is also important to recognize areas of innovation in Delaware with respect to achieving energy independence. Research in critical areas is going on in Delaware at the University of Delaware and Delaware State University and at companies like DuPont, General Electric, W.L. Gore, the Mid-Atlantic Biodiesel Inc. and the Allen Chicken Farm project. However, there is a need for greater support and funding from the government so that the technology behind innovations like solar panels and renewable fuels can be available to all of us.

I am proud that President Bush chose to highlight Delaware's leadership with a visit to the First State after his State of the Union Address last month. With President Bush's tour of DuPont's research in cellulosic ethanol and a focus on a global warming policy in his State of the Union address, it is heartening that the Administration is finally focused on these important issues. In particular, the President has called for a 20% reduction in U.S. gasoline usage in the next ten years. I was particularly pleased to see the President call for help to confront climate change by stopping the projected growth of carbon dioxide emissions from cars, light trucks, and SUV's within 10 years through the use of renewable fuels and higher CAFE standards.

What is so critical about all of this is that meaningful debate has begun. Scientists are talking and people are listening; Members of Congress are introducing legislation; special committees are being formed. I am hopeful that this Congress will serve as an impetus to passing real legislation that will move our energy policy into the 21st century, address climate change, and guide the U.S. towards a cleaner and more secure future.

