

**Mr. Sensenbrenner's Opening Statement for Select Committee on Energy Independence and Global Warming hearing: "What's Cooking With Gas: the Role of Natural Gas in Energy Independence and Global Warming."**

**July 30, 2008**

Natural gas is one of the most versatile and useful fuel sources in the world. It fires power plants, it heats homes, it is a feedstock for many fertilizers and pharmaceutical products, and it can be used as an automotive fuel.

Not only that, natural gas is one of the cleanest burning fossil fuels there is. It produces much less carbon dioxide than oil or coal, and almost negligible amounts of nitrogen oxide and sulfur dioxide.

Our country needs more of this useful fuel.

In fact, there's plenty of it out there for us to use. The U.S. uses about 23 trillion cubic feet of natural gas a year and the Interior Department's Mineral Management Service believes there may be as much as 420 trillion cubic feet of natural gas on the Outer

Continental Shelf. Unfortunately, 85 percent of this potential natural gas bonanza is off limits to production right now, thanks to a congressional moratorium on exploration.

But the Congressional moratorium on natural gas doesn't just stretch to offshore exploration. The testimony of Marc Smith, of the Independent Petroleum Association of Mountain States, shows that of the 279 million acres of federal land that have oil and natural gas potential, 145 million of these acres are closed to leasing. Many of those acres are in the natural-gas-rich intermountain West.

And it's not just the cost of gasoline that is skyrocketing. People are starting to feel the pinch of higher natural gas prices as well. The Energy Information Administration projects that the average cost of natural gas for home heating will rise by more than 40 percent this winter. That's an average of \$364 per home, and for most people, that's not chump change.

And these high costs are having a profound effect on industry too.

The testimony of Rich Wells of the Dow Chemical Company shows that Dow's expenses for natural gas have quadrupled since 2002. With these skyrocketing energy costs, it's a wonder more manufacturers like Dow aren't taking their operations overseas.

Did I mention that natural gas is cheaper in China and India?

The Democratic governor of Pennsylvania, Ed Rendell, understands the value of natural gas. His state uses more than 500 billion cubic feet a year, of which nearly half is for residential uses. Just this April, Gov. Rendell opened up 75,000 additional acres in state forest for natural gas exploration while acknowledging the need for cleaner burning fuels and increased energy independence.

If the Democratic governor of Pennsylvania can do it, why can't Congress?

Republicans are for increasing our domestic energy supplies across the board. We call it our “all of the above” energy strategy. And yes, that includes renewables like solar and wind power. But as Mr. Smith notes in his testimony, natural gas will have to serve as a backup power source for these renewable energy sources, because sometimes the wind doesn’t blow, and sometimes it’s cloudy.

From the testimony today, I think it will be clear to everyone how valuable natural gas will be to our economy and our energy security. I think it will be clear to everyone that increasing our domestic supply of natural gas will help improve our economy and our environment.

What won’t be clear is why the House Democratic leadership is blocking a vote on opening these offshore areas for production of this vital natural resource. It sure isn’t clear to me, and I’m sure

when many people get their home heating bills this winter, it won't be clear to them either.

I urge Speaker Pelosi to let the House vote on this important issue today, because the American people can't wait until tomorrow for relief from these high energy prices.

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