

Mr. Sensenbrenner's Opening Statement for Select Committee on Energy Independence and Global Warming hearing: "Renewing America's Future: Energy Visions of Tomorrow, Today."

July 31, 2008

Since the inception of this select committee last year, I have advocated that anything Congress does to confront climate change should measure up to certain common-sense principles.

Congress should not jeopardize jobs or the economy with burdensome climate change legislation, including what I like to call cap-and-tax, which has already been rejected by the Senate this congressional session. Nor should it pass legislation that fails to make measurable improvements in environmental quality. Certainly, Congress shouldn't require drastic and expensive cuts in greenhouse gas emissions in the U.S. if emerging economic powerhouses like China and India don't make the same commitments.

However, I believe our country can confront climate change and help secure our energy future while still complying with these principles. But only technology can provide the path to reach these goals.

Today's hearing will highlight a few of the promising technologies that are on the horizon.

Hybrid automobile technology holds enormous potential to help reduce demand for gasoline, and I think Congress should encourage its development. Earlier this month, the Science Committee passed a bill I introduced that will establish the first-ever Department of Energy grant for the development of hybrid and plug-in hybrid trucks.

There are fewer trucks on the road than cars, yet trucks consume 48 percent of the fuel America uses for ground transportation. In addition, industries turn their fleets over faster than consumers do their cars, so hybrid-truck technology can be adopted more quickly, and its benefits can be realized sooner. When it comes to reducing fuel use, it is trucks, not cars, that are the low-hanging fruit.

I believe the best way for the federal government to support technological innovation is to incentivize it through research and development grants and tax credits. Regulations cannot assure technological breakthroughs, especially expensive and onerous mandates like the cap-and-tax proposals that have been introduced.

Furthermore, while it's never bad to look to the future, we must always be mindful of the present, and right now, the present includes high gasoline and energy prices that are pinching people and industry alike. Just yesterday, this select committee heard how important natural gas will be to the country's economic and energy future. This is just one of the fossil fuels we will continue to need more of in the future to sustain our energy needs and economic growth.

And yes, oil is another fossil fuel we will continue to need in the future. In its comprehensive 2007 report called *Hard Truths*, the National Petroleum Council said that it will take more than oil and natural gas to meet the future worldwide energy demand, and that development of all types of new technologies were essential. However, the report emphasized that oil and natural gas would have to remain a key part of the worldwide energy picture throughout the foreseeable future.

Former Vice President Al Gore recently proposed ending all CO2 emissions in 10 years. That's as realistic as me winning the 100 meter dash at this year's Olympics. I don't think it helps to propose unrealistic and wholly unworkable plans to confront climate change or secure our energy future. We have to be realistic.

That's why in addition to supporting research and development funding, I also support strengthening the U.S.'s energy production capability by expanding exploration and production to many areas that are likely to have oil and natural gas, but are currently under Congressional moratoria, including the Outer Continental Shelf.

A strong majority of Americans support expanding our oil and natural gas production and dropping the Congressional moratoria on energy exploration in certain areas of the country. If given a vote, Congress will approve a plan to expand environmentally-safe drilling and energy production.

And I think the American people would approve too. It's time for Congress to act on this important issue and I urge Speaker Pelosi to let us vote on this, so that we can provide a secure energy future for our nation.

####