

Press Release

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SCHAKOWSKY SAYS BABY STEPS WILL NOT RESOLVE ENERGY CRISIS

Encourages Committee to do more to promote efficiency and renewable fuels

WASHINGTON, DC - U.S. Representative Jan Schakowsky, a member of the House Energy and Commerce Committee, at a mark-up before the Committee today encouraged her colleagues to take bold, immediate steps to promote energy efficiency and to bring down gasoline prices. Schakowsky also expressed her strong support for the U.S.-Israel Energy Cooperation Act.

Schakowsky's opening statement is below:

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for holding today's markup of legislation that would establish several small-scale programs that promote energy efficiency. I am encouraged that instead of providing further subsidies to the oil and gas industry, the Committee is considering ways in which we can reduce our oil demand and support conservation. However, most of these bills promote baby steps that will not solve the energy crisis facing this country. Gasoline prices have doubled under the Bush Presidency and our dependence on foreign oil has increased by 8 percent. I hope that we will take much bolder steps to change our nation's energy policy by promoting renewable energy sources, oil savings and efficient technologies.

I strongly support the U.S.-Israel Energy Cooperation Act and thank the Chairman for bringing it before us today. To address our energy crisis, the U.S. should use this bill as a model and pursue energy technology sharing agreements with our other allies around the world. Because of a lack of fossil fuel resources within its borders, Israel has been forced to innovate to maintain a sustainable energy policy. Since the U.S. holds only 2% of the world's remaining oil

reserves, while the Middle East holds 60 percent, we must follow Israel's example and play a leadership role in the race to develop hydrogen fuel cell technology and other alternative energy sources that could radically reduce our dependence on fossil fuels.

In addition to the bills before us today, we should move quickly to raise CAFE standards, promote fuel-flexible vehicles, and ensure that our infrastructure is prepared to meet the growing demand for ethanol. It has been two decades since fuel economy standards for passenger cars have been raised, and yet despite holding a debate over CAFE, we have seen no commitment by the Bush Administration or the Republican leadership on this Committee to raise those standards. Simply raising fuel economy standards for passenger cars and light trucks to 33 miles per gallon would eliminate our oil imports from the Persian Gulf.

Additionally, we have the opportunity to pursue energy independence in a way that will bolster our economy. We should invest in the Mid-West, not the Middle East. We must provide the automobile industry with the incentives to make all American automobiles fuel flexible, and ensure that consumers throughout the nation can choose to fuel their cars with E85, E20, or E10. Demand for ethanol has skyrocketed in recent weeks as consumers and businesses look for alternatives to gasoline - we must make sure that there is an adequate distribution network that will provide ethanol at pumps around the country abundantly and cheaply.

For many months, this Committee has exploited the record energy prices and supply shocks that faced consumers to promote the agenda of the oil and gas industry. Today we are closer to the right track, but moving far too slowly and modestly to address the crisis at hand. We must pursue bold solutions and comprehensive reform that will help the United States secure energy independence by reducing our oil demand and investing in clean-burning, sustainable fuels.