

### Democrats Lose Bid for Energy Task Force Info

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WASHINGTON (Reuters) - Republicans on a House committee squelched a Democratic attempt on Wednesday to seek information on Vice President Cheney's energy task force, in a rowdy session punctuated by cries of "Shame!" from Democrats.

On a party line vote of 30-22, the panel voted down the Democratic motion for the committee to ask the White House for the names of members and other information about the 2001 task force that formulated energy policy.

Republicans, including chairman Rep. Joe Barton of Texas, noted Democrats had failed to get the information in various court cases, and charged they were now trying to embarrass the Bush administration ahead of elections with a motion they knew had no hope of approval by a Republican-majority committee.

"I am not going to allow the Energy and Commerce Committee to become a political circus," Barton declared. But he had some trouble keeping order after he announced he would not allow any debate on the subject.

"Shame on you, Mr. Chairman," shouted Rep. Jan Schakowsky, an Illinois Democrat. Committee Republicans booed her, and some in the audience applauded, while Barton observed in his Texas drawl: "The lady is entitled to her opinion."

Another Democrat, Rep. Henry Waxman of California, walked out of the room in disgust, announcing that lawmakers were acting like teenagers.

The unsuccessful "resolution of inquiry" was the latest effort by Democrats to pry loose

information about the energy task force Cheney headed three years ago, which endorsed more oil and gas drilling and a revived nuclear energy program.

Rep. Ralph Hall of Texas summed up for the Republican majority: "Politics, politics, politics."