

House Republican Press Release

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REPUBLICANS: PASS ENERGY MEASURES NOW



HARTFORD – House and Senate Republicans today proposed sweeping compromises to stalled energy bills that have been caught in a year-long legislative logjam and will provide consumer relief through efficiencies and conservation and changes in electrical generation.

With 19 days left in the regular session, House and Senate Democrats who promised a comprehensive energy plan to address rising consumer costs nearly six months ago have failed to pass any legislation. House and Senate Republicans today stepped in to offer alternatives to the failed efforts to deal with the negative ripple effects of industry deregulation.

“We have been told repeatedly going back to last year that the Democrats were prepared to act and still nothing has happened. Republicans have stepped forward and identified many areas of agreement among all sides pertaining to consumer savings, conservation and power generation and put them forth as a compromise,” House Republican Leader Lawrence F. Cafero Jr., of Norwalk said. He noted that Democrats promised action on an energy bill by Feb. 1

Senate Leader Louis DeLuca of Woodbury said, ““We will not be quiet about the Democrats’ lack of action on this issue. Solving Connecticut’s energy problems is going to be a long-term battle for the state and its taxpayers. The sooner we get started, the sooner people will see relief from skyrocketing utility bills. There are a number of energy priorities that both parties agree on, and there is no excuse for further delay in passing these necessary reforms.”

One of the Republican measures highlights areas of broad agreement in both the competing House and Senate bills that have been circulating around the Capitol for months and could be approved immediately in both chambers:

Conservation:

- Restore previously raided conservation funds;
- Offer an air conditioner/ furnace replacement program;
- Expand “Green Buildings” program for state projects.

Generation:

- Require planning to determine current and future generation needs;

- Increase required renewable portfolio standards for clean energy and expand Class III renewable credits;
- Require municipal utilities to promote renewable energy.

Energy Taxes:

- Make permanent tax exemptions for weatherization products as well compact fluorescent lights
- Create property and sales tax exemptions for hybrid vehicles and those with 40 mpg ratings.

The Republicans also outlined areas where there is broad disagreement on the three general areas, but urged quick action to separate those from where there is overwhelming consensus. Some issues, such as the Republican plans to eliminate the state gasoline tax of 25 cents per gallon for three months and Gov. Rell's cap on the gross receipts tax on oil companies, will be part of the overall budget negotiations.

Cafero and DeLuca said that the state has lost numerous opportunities to act on behalf of consumers who have seen their electric bills sky rocket this winter when utility rates were doubled. Republicans said they don't want a repeat of last year when a huge energy bill was put out by Democrats on the last day of session and nothing was passed.

“Unfortunately, unless something drastic happens we are again headed for failure and that is not acceptable,” Cafero said.