

House Republican Press Release

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Committee Passes The Buck On Tangible Energy Reforms



At long last, the Energy and Technology Committee has voted on a number of bills, including four different major proposals, to address the state's energy crisis. Normally it is a good thing to move legislation along in the legislative process, but that is not the case in this instance.

Having been a member of the Energy Committee since 1991, I must say that I am disappointed that after several years of studies, forums, and informational gathering that the best we could do is send a slew of energy bills to the entire General Assembly for consolidation and a final vote. All that does is take the committee out of the process and put the leaders of the General Assembly in the driver's seat. Rest assured a deal will ultimately be hashed out behind closed doors and out of the public arena.

I voted against the four major bills to send a message to my colleagues that it is the job of the committee to do its due diligence and craft the best legislation possible to address the energy issues crippling residents and businesses in our state. I am concerned that there won't be any bill pulled together by the end of the legislative session, and that would be a disservice to all citizens and ratepayers. Or worse, a bill will be voted out of the General Assembly that could actually set us back from finding ways to stabilize and lower energy costs for our residential and economic development needs.

Though members of the committee disagreed on certain aspects of different bills, the issue is not a Republican vs. Democrat issue. The biggest difference among committee members is one of philosophy: bigger government vs. free and open markets. There were many initiatives that the committee was able to agree on, but unfortunately the chairmen of the committee were unwilling to act on what we agreed upon and then work on the more technical, finite components of an energy reform bill, as House Minority Leader Rep. Larry Cafero called on the committee to do earlier this year. As it was, none of the bills approved by the committee contained tangible relief for rate payers, who continue to struggle with rising costs. In that respect, the committee has failed in its duties.

Lastly, deregulation should continue to be a part of the answer as the legislature's work on energy reform moves forward. When deregulation legislation was passed in 1998, the General Assembly built-in artificial price caps to ensure there would be no major spikes in energy prices. Those price caps were then extended for two years, until 2005. That meant, of course, that when the caps were finally removed we saw a major increase in

costs, and, combined with unrest and uncertainty in parts of the world, that has led to a “perfect storm” that we are trying to deal with at the moment. With regulations and restrictions finally no longer severely impeding companies wanting to come into our state and offer true competition to benefit consumers, it is my hope the legislature will allow that to happen for the benefit of consumers.

Rep. Richard Ferrari (R-62) represents Barkhamsted, East Granby, Granby and New Hartford in the General Assembly.