

House Republican Press Release

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Press Office: 860-240-8700

“ENERGY REFORM NOW”



High electric rates, soaring prices of gas at the pump, and rising home heating costs are negatively affecting every household in Connecticut. People are clamoring for relief. House and Senate Democrats –the very people who promised a comprehensive energy plan to address rising consumer costs nearly six months ago-- have failed to initiate any legislation.

The major reason for inaction is there are substantial differences between the Democrat Senate and House proposed bills as to both the cause of high prices and a possible solution. What is the basis for these soaring costs? Is it deregulation (passed by the legislature in 1998)? Is it a lack of new generating facilities? Is it an over-reliance on natural gas and fossil fuels? Is it all of the above?

Not only are there multiple questions in defining the problem, but also there are multiple answers to the solution.

Quite frankly, any legislation the General Assembly approves this session will not provide immediate relief to monthly fuel and electric bills nor an immediate reduction in the price of gas at the pump.

However, there are some things Republican legislators think can be done and have proposed to provide gradual and long-term improvement. These energy initiatives include:

Conservation:

- promote and encourage conservation and off-peak use of power;
- offer an air conditioner/ furnace replacement program;
- expand “Green Buildings” standards for state projects;
- restore the previously-raided Energy Conservation and Load Management funds.

Generation:

- convene a planning council to determine current and future generation needs;
- investigate building a new nuclear plant at Millstone;
- allow additional generating facilities to meet peak power needs.

Energy taxes:

- make permanent tax exemptions for weatherization and energy saving products;
- continue sales tax exemptions for hybrid vehicles with 40 mpg ratings.

The energy problem is complex, and the solutions are not simple. Legislators on both sides of the aisle need to cooperate and craft long-range, viable strategies.