

WASHINGTON DC, 1/18/07 - Today, Rep. Steve Israel, Member of the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Energy and Water and Co-Founder of the Congressional Defense Energy Working Group, spoke on the House Floor today in favor of H.R. 6, the CLEAN Energy Act. Below are his remarks:

“Mr. Speaker, as we debate this rule and debate how we’re going to debate this rule, an F-16 is burning 25 gallons of fuel every minute. A stryker combat vehicle in which our troops travel is traveling at the rate of about seven miles per gallon. I was on a C-17 recently; it’s burning 3,000 gallons an hour.

“Energy is a national security issue. It is a vital national security issue. The decision before to ask this house to adjourn I think is emblematic of failed energy policies. There is no more debating or delaying. Its time to act.

“Last year the Department of Defense spent \$10.6 billion dollars on basic energy costs. Of that the Air Force spent \$4.7 billion dollars on one thing: buying fuel for its planes. Now I believe in a robust defense. We’ve got some significant challenges in the world. China is a significant challenge. Iran is a significant challenge. But the policies on energy that we have had for the past six years have put us in a position where we are borrowing money from China to fund our defense budgets to fuel our military which requires buying oil from the Persian Gulf to defend us from China and the Persian Gulf. How does that make sense? It makes no sense.

“I was in China just several weeks ago. They are going to reduce their energy consumption by 20% and keep growing. All while increasing their use of renewables while we continue to rely on our adversaries to power our military to protect us from our adversaries. This dependence on foreign oil, Mr. Speaker, is as glaring a threat to our national security as Sputnik was, as the Cold War was, as the Space Race was. And our answer to those threats was that we will research and develop and manufacture and engineer, and land a man on the moon by the end of the decade. We confronted those threats and beat those threats.

“It’s time to quit debating and quit delaying and quit stalling. It’s time to put the protection of our troops ahead of the profits of the big oil companies. Its time to understand that this is a critical national security issue that has been tried and debated and delayed for thirty years and it is time to act now. I thank the gentleman and I yield back the balance of my time.”

In July 2006, Israel, along with his Republican colleague Rep. Roscoe Bartlett, formed the Defense Energy Working Group. The working group, founded on the premise that the military's dependence on energy is a national security vulnerability, is a bipartisan study group of House members that identifies challenges associated with this dependence and recommends logistical and policy solutions.

The Department of Defense (DOD) consumes 97% of the federal government's fuel, costing taxpayers over \$10 billion per year. Additionally, 60% of our oil supply is imported and over two-thirds of the world's oil reserves are held by Persian Gulf countries. This consumption, coupled with the fact that the US borrows money from countries that compete for the world's oil supply, poses a range of national security vulnerabilities.

H.R. 6, the CLEAN Energy Act of 2007, passed today with a bipartisan vote of 264-123. The legislation would repeal \$14 billion in subsidies and tax breaks for Big Oil companies in order to invest in clean renewable and alternative fuels and energy efficiency.