friend. There are reports that on the HMO bill, the gentleman plans to bring their bill to the floor before the 4th of July. Are we likely to see that come to the floor next week?

Mr. ARMEY. I appreciate the gentleman's inquiry, but while we are placing extremely high priority on the HMO reform and would have hopes to have it on the floor before the 4th of July, I think that it is clear it will not be available next week. My own view is that we would probably expect it soon after the 4th of July at the earliest.

Mr. BONIOR. Finally, Mr. Speaker, if I could just raise this issue with the gentleman from Texas, the distinguished majority leader, I wanted to inform the gentleman that we now have 198 signatures on a discharge petition for school modernization.

There are 21 Republicans who have sponsored the Nancy Johnson-Charlie Rangel bill on school modernization. I would hope that this bill could be brought before the body. The need is obvious, all around the country with one out of every three schools having serious school refurbishing and modernization needs.

If I could just take one other minute, I would like to just relay to my colleague regarding a school that I visited in the Detroit area recently. It was built in 1926, and it was built to hold 900 students. It has 1500 students in it, 40 to a classroom, many of the obvious problems that we see with our schools, windows, heating problems, the unavailability of privacy in bathrooms, water not working.

These issues are prevalent in our schools throughout the country. Many of our schools need support in the endeavor to refurbish and to modernize. And there is bipartisan support for this bill.

I am just hoping that Members on the other side of the aisle will ask their leadership to bring this bill to the floor. If they do not, I am hopeful that they will join us to go to 218 so we can discharge it.

Having said that, I thank my colleague for his schedule for the remainder of the week and next week and I wish him a good weekend.

Mr. ARMEY. I thank the gentleman.

ADJOURNMENT TO MONDAY, JUNE 18, 2001

Mr. ARMEY. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that when the House adjourns today, it adjourn to meet at 2 p.m. on Monday next.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. ISSA.) Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Texas?

There was no objection.

HOUR OF MEETING ON TUESDAY, JUNE 19, 2001

Mr. ARMEY. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that when the House adjourns on Monday, June 18, 2001, it adjourn to meet at 12:30 p.m. on Tuesday, June 19, 2001, for morning hour debates.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Texas?

There was no objection.

□ 1400

DISPENSING WITH CALL OF PRIVATE CALENDAR ON TUESDAY NEXT

Mr. ARMEY. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that the call of the Private Calendar be dispensed with on Tuesday next.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. ISSA). Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Texas?

There was no objection.

DISPENSING WITH CALENDAR WEDNESDAY BUSINESS ON WEDNESDAY NEXT

Mr. ARMEY. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that the business in order under the Calendar Wednesday rule be dispensed with on Wednesday next.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Texas?

There was no objection.

HAPPY FATHER'S DAY

Mr. ARMEY. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that it be the express will of this body that every father in America have a glorious weekend.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Texas?

There was no objection.

FERC LIKELY TO PUT NEW LIMITS ON CALIFORNIA ENERGY PRICES

(Mr. MCDERMOTT asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. MCDERMOTT. Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to report here, on Flag Day, that the oil industry forces of George II are in retreat. A few weeks ago, the Duke of Halliburton, Mr. CHENEY, met with the Oregon, Washington, Montana, and Idaho delegations and said there is no problem, we are not doing anything. Then a few days ago he met with the California delegation and stiffed them in the same way.

Now it turns out in today's newspaper, which I will enter into the RECORD, an article from the Washington Post, they are in retreat. They are going to go down to FERC and finally ask FERC to do what the law says it must do, that is, cap unreasonable prices in electricity.

The United States west of the Rockies has been ignored by this administration, but they are now en route. They are running for the hills. They have dropped their guns. They have torn off their uniforms, and they are running to hide down at FERC.

They are not going to get away with putting in something down at FERC that just does a little something. We want real caps on those gougers. Vote for the Anti-Gouging Act of 2001.

[From the Washington Post, June 14, 2001]

FERC LIKELY TO PUT NEW LIMITS ON CALIFORNIA ENERGY PRICES

(By Mike Allen and Juliet Eilperin)

A federal agency plans to impose new limits on California energy prices next week, according to senior government officials, a move that would offer President Bush and Republican lawmakers relief from an increasingly thorny political problem in the nation's largest state.

The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission plans to hold a special meeting Monday to take up possible solutions to California's power crunch. And officials said yesterday the leading proposal would control the wholesale price of electricity throughout the West around the clock.

Such a measure would expand a rule that applies only to California and only during the most severe power shortages. Gov. Gray Davis (D) has said the current program is shot full of loopholes and does not benefit consumers. Under the new proposal, the government would set a target price—generous enough to permit a profit for efficient producers—and companies would have to justify higher prices in writing, officials said.

The move comes as concern is growing among congressional Republicans that the Bush administration and its GOP allies were losing the political battle over California's energy crisis—and that it could affect the party's fortunes in next year's elections.

House Majority Whip Tom DeLay (R–Tex.) has assigned a team of Republicans to help deflect legislative attacks on Bush's energy policies, and has instructed members to deliver daily floor speeches defending the administration's plans. House Republicans took up Bush's broader energy bill—which focuses on stepping up production—in earnest yesterday in an effort to pass it by midsummer.

Congressional Democrats have been increasing pressure on the administration to address quickly the skyrocketing electricity prices and power shortages in Western states. Sen. Joseph I. Lieberman (D–Conn), the new chairman of the Governmental Affairs Committee, plans to hold a hearing Wednesday—two days after the commission meeting—to examine federal regulation of energy, and his main witness will be Davis.

House negotiations on a bipartisan emergency energy bill for California broke down last week just as Democrats were taking control of the Senate. In response, Rep. W. J. ''Billy'' Tauzin (R–La.), chairman of the Energy and Commerce Committee, and 14 other GOP lawmakers seized on a proposal by Rep. Doug Ose (R–Calif.) to make FERC's rules apply around the clock. Tauzin wrote FERC Chairman Curt Hebert Jr. to urge its adoption.

Hebert scheduled the unusual FERC meeting shortly thereafter. ''Nobody would disagree with the urgency of the situation and the need for the commission to act promptly. We're working feverishly to do that,'' said Walter Ferguson, Hebert's chief of staff.

The commission, composed of three Republicans and two Democrats, is independent. Members are appointed by the president and confirmed by the Senate. Bush and key members of the commission have said repeatedly that they have ideological and practical objections to an absolute cap on

the wholesale price of electricity, which Davis has argued is the best way to prevent electricity from becoming unaffordable this summer.

Federal officials said the commission's less-stringent measure—''face-saving,'' Democrats called it—would help stabilize power prices while overcoming White House and commission members' objections to a cap.

''We aren't overly concerned that this will discourage generation like real price controls would,'' a White House official said. ''A hard cap would be disaster. It would cause electricity generators to shut down.''

Another White House official said that the administration would not take a formal position until the commission has voted and the details are clear, but added that the measure sounded acceptable ''in theory.''

''The president has been calling on the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission to be vigilant in making sure that illegal price gouging does not occur in California or elsewhere,'' the official said.

A California Democratic official said, ''They realized they have been taking a beating on this issue, both in California and nationally. This is the equivalent of Bush saying, 'Uncle.' ''

However, Davis said at a news conference in Sacramento that he remains ''a doubting Thomas'' about the prospects for dramatic action from the commission. ''I've been fighting FERC for over a year,'' he said. ''The federal government has not been doing its job. If they finally do, I'll say, 'It's about time, but thank you.' ''

Sen. Dianne Feinstein (D–Calif.) said the measure being considered ''would be a flexible price cap, set at the price of least-efficient megawatt of the least-efficient plant.''

''Price mitigation appears to be a way to avoid using the words 'price cap' or 'cost-based rate,' which some members of FERC and the Bush administration find objectionable,'' Feinstein said. ''I don't care what they call it, as long as they get the job done.''

In April, FERC issued a price restraint plan that established cost-based price ceilings for generators selling wholesale power in the state, but limited the measure to power emergencies when California's available power reserves drop below 7.5 percent of demand. The order is credited with helping bring down California's electricity prices, which dropped below $100 a megawatt hour statewide last week for the first time since the crisis began last autumn. Fuel conservation, milder weather and increased generating capacity also have played a part.

House Republicans, after the first hearing on Bush's energy package yesterday, held a closed-door meeting with administration officials and outlined an ambitious schedule for enacting it. According to participants, House panels would pass legislation over the next several weeks so the entire chamber could vote before the August recess.

The meeting in DeLay's office included more than a dozen House members as well as Energy Secretary Spencer Abraham, Interior Secretary Gail A. Norton and Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Christine Todd Whitman.

Much of the meeting focused on how the GOP could fight Democratic attacks more effectively. Abraham suggested Republicans could rebut the Democrats' arguments because they were based on ''flimsy evidence,'' while DeLay argued his colleagues could not afford to be passive, sources said.

''We want a proactive message,'' DeLay told the group. ''We want solutions, not rationing.''

Democrats are convinced the GOP is politically vulnerable on the question of energy, and they are determined to hammer away at the theme to boost their chances in next year's election. ''The environment is an issue that could decide many swing congressional districts in 2002,'' said Rep. Edward J. Markey (D–Mass.), who questioned Abraham sharply yesterday during an energy and air quality subcommittee hearing.

The party has already run a series of radio ads on the energy crisis in the districts of several vulnerable members, and House Democrats now regularly hold news conference accusing the GOP as being beholden to special interests.

Staff writer Peter Behr contributed to this report.

SPECIAL ORDERS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2001, and under a previous order of the House, the following Members will be recognized for 5 minutes each.

DISTURBING DEVELOPMENTS IN THE NAGORNO-KARABAGH PEACE PROCESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PALLONE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, I come to the House floor this afternoon to discuss some disturbing developments in the Nagorno-Karabagh peace process among Armenia, Azerbaijan and Nagorno Karabagh.

In April, the leaders of two of these nations, Armenia and Azerbaijan, met in Key West, Florida, and all indications were that they were getting closer to reaching a peace agreement. Despite such indications, Azerbaijan's president, Jeydar Ailyev, has effectively called a halt to the peace process, and now declares that Azerbaijan is ''ready for war at any time it is needed''.

Obviously, Mr. Speaker, this statement not only does not promote peace, but actually serves to increase tensions. If Azerbaijan's leader is serious about ending the conflict between his country and Armenia, he should stop catering to militant factions within his country. This conflict has been going on for over 10 years now and is being unnecessarily drawn out by Mr. Ailyev.

Mr. Speaker, the United States is one of the co-chairs of the Minsk Group, the body under the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the OSCE, charged with facilitating a negotiated settlement to this dispute. Besides the political investment in the peace process, our Nation also has a vested interest to bring about stability in this region.

In order to achieve this, Azerbaijan and Armenia must embrace greater economic integration, development of infrastructure and cooperation in other areas. This is the path that President Ailyev must be encouraged to follow. Indeed, the benefits to his country would be significant by opening his nation to substantially more trade, investment and assistance. However, any kind of economic cooperation between the two countries must begin with Azerbaijan lifting a decade long blockade on Armenia.

Mr. Speaker, section 907 of the Freedom Support Act makes the United States' position on this blockade very clear to Ailyev, and he has tried unsuccessfully to demand repeal. What section 907 does is to effectively limit some forms of direct American aid to Azerbaijan until that country lifts its blockades of Armenia and Karabagh. It is important to know that this law has no effect on humanitarian aid, democracy building measures, as well as OPIC, TDA and Ex-Im engagement.

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to strongly encourage Mr. Ailyev to drop the refusal to accept direct participation of representatives from Nagorno Karabagh in the negotiations. The Nagorno-Karabagh conflict is not only a bilateral dispute between Armenia and Azerbaijan. While these countries must obviously be part of the negotiations and the final settlement, the people of Karabagh, who have their own democratically elected government, must have a seat at the table. After all, it is their homeland and their lives that are at stake in this peace process. No one else should be allowed to make life and death decisions for them.

Armenia and Nagorno Karabagh have continued to reiterate their commitment to the peace process even in the face of stalling and the ongoing threatening comments coming from Azerbaijan.

These tactics are nothing new. In November of 1998, the OSCE submitted a comprehensive peace proposal to Armenia, Azerbaijan and Nagorno Karabagh. Despite serious reservations, both Armenia and Nagorno Karabagh accepted a peace proposal as a basis of negotiations. Azerbaijan summarily rejected it.

On June 14, 1999, the Azeri military attacked Karabagh's defensive forces along the Mardakort section of the Line of Conflict between Azerbaijan and Karabagh. Representatives of the OSCE, who visited the area, confirmed this act of aggression.

Mr. Speaker, Armenia's Foreign Minister, Vartan Osakian, said this past week that Armenia was ready to resume talks. He also urged Azerbaijan not to deviate from the ''Paris principles'', the understanding developed by the Armenian and Azerbaijani presidents during two rounds of talks in the French capital in January and March, and in Key West in April this year.

According to Ambassador Carey Cavanaugh, the U.S. representative to the Minsk Group, these negotiations have made real progress. He stated in an interview with the U.S. Department of State that both presidents felt that, after their last meeting, that substantial progress had been made that exceeded both their expectations.

Mr. Speaker, Armenia and Nagorno Karabagh are ready to settle this dispute. They have fully committed to