

Mr. Speaker, Americans deserve an energy policy that protects our consumers, our environment, and our national security. I support legislation that will provide a real, long-term, comprehensive energy policy. The Democratic motion to recommit will work to lower gas prices, stop price gouging, and prevent future blackouts. I urge all my colleagues to support this sensible, long term alternative.

Mr. MARKEY. Mr. Speaker, I rise in opposition to H.R. 4513, the Renewable Energy Project Siting Improvement Act.

This bill should really be called the Non-negotiable Energy Project Siting Act. This is a gift to those who would like to gut the National Environmental Policy Act, wrapped in the green paper of renewable energy.

If the Republican leadership really cared about increasing renewable energy use in America, today we would be debating the extension of a renewable energy production tax credit, or a renewable portfolio standard or even national interconnection standards. Those are the policy priorities of the renewable energy industry, not gutting our national environmental laws.

Instead of taking up those policy priorities, the Republican leadership has decided instead to just take the public out of the process. H.R. 4513 would eliminate the requirement that any alternative other than not building the project be considered, and it limits the public comment period to just 20 days. 20 days is an inadequate amount of time for the public to respond to complicated energy projects like hydroelectric dams and waste incineration, which are included in the bill's broad definition of "renewable energy project." This bill says to sportsmen and Indian tribes that their comments on potentially harmful dam projects don't matter. This bill says to parents that their comments on plans to build dirty waste incinerators next to their children's schools don't matter.

This is a Republican solution in search of a problem. You'll hear a lot about wind energy today, but the fact of the matter is that 6374 megawatts of wind power have been developed under the current regulations. It is the start-stop nature of the renewable energy production tax credits under the Republican controlled Congress and White House that are making it difficult for developers to bring more wind energy online.

Democrats are ready to debate long-term production tax credits. Democrats are ready to debate a national Renewable Portfolio Standard. Democrats are ready to debate interconnection standards. But instead the Republicans just want to eliminate public involvement in energy projects that impact their families.

I urge my colleagues to vote against this misguided bill and preserve the public's right to comment on energy projects—renewable or not—that impact their families.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. ISAKSON). All time for debate having expired or been yielded back, it is now in order to consider the amendment made in order pursuant to House Resolution 672 in Part A of House Report 108-540.

AMENDMENT OFFERED BY MR. POMBO

Mr. POMBO. Mr. Speaker, I offer an amendment.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Clerk will designate the amendment.

The text of the amendment is as follows:

Part A Amendment printed in House Report 108-540 offered by Mr. POMBO:

Page 3, beginning at line 13, strike "or the combustion of".

Page 3, line 13, insert a comma after "oil".

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to House Resolution 672, the gentleman from California (Mr. POMBO) and a Member opposed each will control 5 minutes.

Mr. RAHALL. Mr. Speaker, although not in opposition to the amendment, I wish to claim the time in opposition.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Without objection, the gentleman from West Virginia will control the time in opposition.

There was no objection.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California (Mr. POMBO).

Mr. POMBO. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, this amendment would clarify that the environmental review process in H.R. 4513 would not apply to oil and gas leasing activities. This amendment would remove any confusion about what this bill does or does not do.

We have discussed this bill with the minority and they offered this change to the base text. After having gone back and forth, I believe this is a necessary change to the underlying bill to eliminate any confusion that there may be. By making this change, this amendment incorporates all of their proposed changes, short of rewriting the bill. Rewriting this bill would mean doing nothing to promote renewable energy development, which I find unacceptable.

I support this amendment, and I urge its adoption.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. RAHALL. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, we have no objection to the gentleman from California's amendment clarifying the obvious fact that oil and gas and coal are not renewable energy sources.

I do not think though that this is the end of the attempts to expand NEPA exemptions, and I urge those concerned about the integrity of coastal areas to remain vigilant. I would note, however, that even with this amendment, the pending legislation could be construed as providing NEPA exemptions to the construction of new hydropower dams on rivers and it could apply to incinerators using garbage or other waste products.

As I read the text, the exemptions in this bill include hydropower and incinerators which general power. As the gentleman from California is well aware, siting of dams and incinerators are very controversial matters and it is important, I believe, that the public knows what we are doing here on the floor today to their rights.

Mr. Speaker I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. POMBO. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, in conclusion, I appreciate the gentleman working with me on this particular amendment, but again I would say that in regard to his final comments there is nothing in this bill that eviscerates, guts, dissects or any other thing our Nation's environmental laws. All it does is it makes the system more efficient by reducing the number of alternatives that have to be looked at on a renewable energy project.

If somebody wants to build a garbage burning incinerator in the middle of a national park, we both know that the answer is no before they even apply for a permit. But I guess trying to scare people on this tries to make things work.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. All time having been yielded, pursuant to House Resolution 672, the previous question is ordered on the bill and on the further amendment by the gentleman from California (Mr. POMBO).

The question is on the amendment offered by the gentleman from California (Mr. POMBO).

The amendment was agreed to.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on engrossment and third reading of the bill.

The bill was ordered to be engrossed and read a third time, and was read the third time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the passage of the bill.

The question was taken; and the Speaker pro tempore announced that the ayes appeared to have it.

Mr. RAHALL. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX and the Chair's prior announcement, further proceedings on this question will be postponed.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. POMBO. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on H.R. 4513.

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

There was no objection.

ENERGY POLICY ACT OF 2004

Mr. HALL. Mr. Speaker, pursuant to House Resolution 671, I call up the bill (H.R. 4503) to enhance energy conservation and research and development, to provide for security and diversity in the energy supply for the American people, and for other purposes.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of H.R. 4503 is as follows:

H.R. 4503

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,