

Last week, the President visited Calvert County to tour Calvert Cliffs Nuclear Power Plant. As a strong supporter of Calvert Cliffs, and a proponent of nuclear power, I am pleased that the President was able to tour this facility. However, I am deeply disappointed that he has failed to lead our country toward energy independence by establishing a real, forward looking energy policy.

Our country needs an energy strategy that reduces our dependence on foreign sources of oil and strengthens our national security. We need a strategic vision for our energy future that focuses on promoting the next generation of energy production, efficiency and alternative and renewable fuels that will power our economy and protect our environment. The bill that the President is pushing Congress to pass will accomplish none of these goals.

This President has done very little to make progress on the issues the American people care about. In fact, the most recent polling data shows that as many as 51% of registered voters nationwide disapprove of the way he is leading the country and nearly three-fourths of the respondents believe that the Republican-led Congress does not share their priorities.

At the end of April, the House of Representatives passed the Republican Energy bill that harms our natural resources, costs taxpayers billions of dollars, weakens consumer protections, does little to reduce America's dependence on foreign oil, and included a provision that protects the producers of a gasoline additive that poisons drinking water.

This bill also does nothing to address the skyrocketing price of gas, a point the President admitted during his speech at Calvert Cliffs. Since 2002, average gasoline prices have increased by more than 50 percent. I don't need to tell you that this is putting a real squeeze on families as the driving and vacation season arrives. Under current estimates, a family of four will spend \$2,873 on gasoline this year, \$423 more than last year and almost \$800 more than two years ago, based on information from the Consumer Expenditure Survey from the Bureau of Labor Statistics and the Energy Information Administration. With wages stagnant and household income down, these rising prices – along with health and education costs – are putting a real strain on American families' pocketbooks.

Unfortunately, over the past several years a deeply divided Republican Party has failed to work out differences between the bills passed in the House and the Senate and to address the energy needs of our nation. And, there is little evidence that they will even come close to success again this year.

The worst part is that within our own nation we have a wealth of ideas on how to develop sustainable and environmentally-conscious forms of energy. We have the vision for innovative technologies, the ability to produce alternative sources of energy, and an obligation to protect and invest in our natural resources.

In order to change how our nation uses and produces energy, the President must rise above partisan disputes and engage Congress, demonstrate leadership and direction, and craft a real energy policy that puts the public interest ahead of special interests'.

America needs a new energy path that will provide our economy and our people with the energy we need while protecting our national security, strengthening our economy, and preserving the health of the world and its people for generations to come. The ability to dramatically transform our energy future is well within our reach. Yet for too long the will to implement the keys to our independence, security, and wellbeing has been lacking.

I will continue to urge the President to engage the Congress to adopt a national energy plan that secures a sound and sustainable energy future.