



Column For Week of: February 16, 2009

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The Future of Energy in Missouri

With the current economic crisis, many are concerned about the future—the future of our economy, the future of our jobs, and the future of our country. I am also thinking about the future, but lately, I have been focused on the future of our state's energy situation. This is why I signed on to co-sponsor Senate Bill 228. This bill attracted controversy recently when it was heard in committee, but I want to explain why I am supporting this legislation.

Senate Bill 228, also called the Missouri Clean and Renewable Energy Construction Act, modifies the construction work in progress (CWIP) law to allow financing costs associated with the construction of certain types of clean energy and low carbon-producing power plants to be recoverable by an electric company through its customer rates prior to plant start-up. The type of plants covered under the act include nuclear facilities, coal-fired power plants that minimize air emissions, and power plants that generate energy from renewable sources such as wind, solar, and biomass. The bill lays out the specific process a plant needs to go through in order for these stipulations to apply, a process that is managed by the Public Service Commission.

Some of the motivation behind this legislation comes from AmerenUE. The company wants to build a second nuclear power plant at its existing facility in mid-Missouri. Much of the controversy comes from the fact that if the General Assembly passes a modified CWIP law, utility companies will be able to charge consumers higher rates for facilities still under construction. The costs that could be passed on to consumers would only be the financing costs. In other words, public utilities will remain responsible for the principal payments to build the plant, but consumers would help with the interest payments while the plant was under construction.

Let me make it clear that I support the lowest possible costs for consumers. In fact, Missouri is one of the lowest cost states for energy services, and if we want to continue this

pattern, we must be able to provide energy security. With many companies feeling the strain of the economy, the finance security provided through this legislation is attractive and will encourage public utilities to take steps to expand to meet our state's future needs. It is, in actuality, the lowest cost option because Missouri consumers will pay more if we have to outsource our energy needs in the future.

There are states in this country that are facing an energy crisis. On the west and east coasts, there are places where the population is increasing so fast that the public utility companies cannot keep up. In California, for example, consumers are often faced with rolling brownouts and blackouts. I do not want Missouri to face this future. Federal regulations against other forms of energy, such as regular coal-burning power plants, continue to increase, which could lead to effectively disallowing this energy option all together. Clearing the way for clean energy expansion in our state is the best way to make sure our future energy needs are secure.

As a policy maker in this state, I feel it is my responsibility to look towards the years ahead and make sure the way is clear for progressive energy options. This is what is best for our state's consumers and businesses—the people that make Missouri great. The ultimate goal of SB 228 is self-reliance, and I support it because it will provide the most secure, low-cost future for energy needs in our state. I have no doubt that this bill will continue to be an issue of discussion and debate throughout the legislative session, but it is my hope that my colleagues will see the merits of the bill and agree that it is the best way to ensure that the lights will come on when we flip the switch —today and tomorrow.

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As always, I appreciate hearing your comments, opinions and concerns. Please feel free to call me in Jefferson City at (573) 751-2108. You can also write to the address listed below.

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