



UNITED STATES SENATOR BERNIE SANDERS

Environmental Update 2008



Dear Fellow Vermonter:

Knowing of your interest in energy and environmental issues, I write today to inform you about some of the important steps that Congress has taken on these important matters and the many challenges that yet remain.

As a member of both the Environment and Public Works Committee and the Energy and Natural Resources Committee, I spent a significant amount of time last year fighting for policies that will help us respond to one of the greatest crises facing our country and the planet – global warming. While we have an enormous amount of work in front of us in order to reverse the flawed and failed environmental policies of the Bush Administration, we are beginning to make some progress when it comes to responding to global warming and environmental degradation.

The Energy Bill became law on December 19, 2007. Although far from perfect, this bill begins the process of breaking our dependency on fossil fuels and moving us toward energy efficiency and sustainable energy. One of the critical and most contentious provisions included in the bill was an increase in fuel economy (CAFE) standards, something that Congress had not done since 1975. Further, the legislation requires more efficient light bulbs and sets high standards to ensure that federal buildings are much more “green.”

Through my position on the Energy Committee, I was able to play an active role in drafting the Energy Bill, and I am proud that I managed to get some very important provisions included in it. First, in order to enable states, cities and towns to better move toward energy efficiency and sustainable energy, my office co-authored an Energy and Environmental Block Grant Program. This was one of the highest priorities of the U.S. Conference of Mayors and other organizations representing local governments. Second, in order to tap the enthusiasm of and expertise on our college campuses, we developed a grant and loan program for institutions, including colleges and universities. Third, we have advanced an Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy Workforce Development Program – “Green Jobs.” These programs are discussed in greater detail in this newsletter. I should emphasize, however, that while all of these provisions have now been authorized and are law, we are now going to have to make sure that they are fully funded.

In addition to the Energy Bill, I worked hard last year to strengthen the “cap and trade” global warming bill that was voted out of the Environment and Public Works Committee. Even though this bill does not go nearly as far as the comprehensive global warming legislation that I introduced with my colleague Senator Boxer, it was a significant step forward in cutting greenhouse gas emissions. Please refer to the article in this newsletter for more information on this legislation.

To learn more about the work that my office is doing on energy and environmental matters, as well as other issues, I urge you to visit my Website at www.sanders.senate.gov. If you have any questions or if we can assist you in any way, please call us at (800) 339-9834 or (802) 862-0697, or email us at www.sanders.senate.gov/comments/.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in green ink that reads "Bernie".

Bernard Sanders
United States Senator

EFFORTS TO STRENGTHEN GLOBAL WARMING BILL

Vermonters are keenly aware of the need for strong action on global warming. For that reason, the first bill I introduced as a United States Senator, S. 309, addresses this pressing problem and is the boldest and most comprehensive legislation on this issue. What distinguishes it from the other global warming bills is that it follows what science demands – that we reduce total greenhouse gas emissions by at least 15 percent by 2020 and 80 percent by 2050. I am proud that my bill has garnered 19 co-sponsors.

I am also taking an active role in other climate change legislation that is moving through the Senate, like the Lieberman-Warner bill, S. 2191. This bill calls for a “cap-and-trade” mechanism for reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Originally, the bill did not provide funding for renewable energy, like wind, solar, and geothermal. You will be pleased to know that I was able to amend the bill so that 25 percent of the proceeds from the auctioning of pollution permits will be used to fund renewable energy projects and programs, a level on par with the amount directed to advanced coal and carbon sequestration programs. You may also be interested to learn that I offered several amendments in committee to strengthen this legislation, including:

- An amendment requiring the U.S. to cut its global warming pollution by 80 percent below 1990 levels by 2050.
- A “Scientific Lookback” amendment requiring the Environmental Protection Agency to act if the National Academy of Sciences discovers that we have not taken sufficient action under the bill to

avoid dangerous global warming, thus keeping our response to climate change accountable to new scientific developments.

- An amendment to require that 100 percent of emission permits be auctioned off, rather than given away to industry for free, which could give the companies windfall profits

While I am disappointed that my amendments were not accepted by the committee, I will continue to seek other opportunities to strengthen this legislation as it moves toward the Senate floor.



SUPPORTING CITIES, TOWNS, COUNTIES, AND STATES

The Energy Bill included a new and exciting national program that I championed: the Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant program. Modeled after the highly successful Community Development Block Grant

program, this new initiative will support on-the-ground efforts by cities, towns, and states as they tackle our shared serious energy problems.

The Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grants program provides federal recognition of grassroots efforts and supports their pursuit of solutions that reduce fossil fuel emissions, reduce total energy use, and improve energy

efficiency. There are two distinct programs created to help towns, cities, and states: a formula-based block grant and a competitive grant.

Under the formula-based program, the ten largest cities and counties in a state will be eligible for funding. The competitive grant program is designed for cities and towns in less populated states, such as Vermont. These smaller states will receive priority consideration when funding decisions are being made to support local efforts that are not eligible through the block grant program.

We are seeing an enormous amount of creativity and innovation at the grass-roots level of our country on energy matters, and I am very excited about the potential of the new Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant program. My hope is that Vermont’s cities and towns will fully utilize this program and develop breakthrough concepts that can be shared throughout the country.



GREEN JOB TRAINING: GOOD PAYING JOBS AND A CLEANER ENVIRONMENT

Last year, it was brought to my attention that one of the biggest hurdles to increasing the weatherization of our homes and buildings was a simple lack of a trained workforce. I was appalled, and drafted legislation to address the problem. Today, I am happy to report that an idea that started with a meeting with Vermont constituents has turned into a new national pilot program that will not only help put people to work, but will do so in jobs that help respond to global warming.

Green Jobs is a multi-faceted program, but there are two components that I especially want to highlight for you: the State Energy Training Partnership program and the Pathways Out of Poverty program. The State Energy Training Partnership program will competitively provide funding to non-profit partnerships that include equal participation from industry and labor, and demonstrate experience in operating worker training programs as well as the ability to identify and involve target populations. The Pathways Out of Poverty section is focused on competitively funding worker training programs to unemployed or under-employed individuals.

A number of studies have found that, with the appropriate policies, the renewable energy and energy efficiency industries could create millions of good paying jobs. They include work in manufacturing, construction, accounting, management and other areas. In other words, moving our country toward a new direction in energy is not only the sane thing to do as we combat global warming, but it is also good economic policy. That is why I am very proud of this Green Jobs Training program.



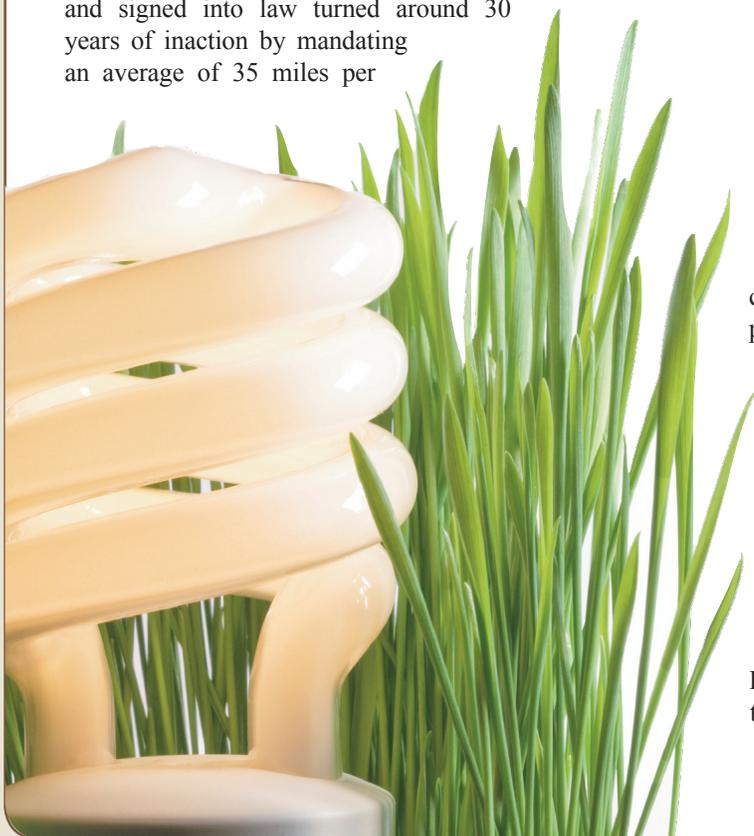
OTHER ELEMENTS OF HISTORIC ENERGY BILL

Fuel economy standards, known as CAFE (Corporate Average Fuel Economy) standards, have remained stagnant for years despite the fact that increased fuel economy can help save consumers money and reduce global warming pollution. Last year, the energy bill passed by Congress and signed into law turned around 30 years of inaction by mandating an average of 35 miles per

gallon by 2020 for light trucks and cars. While I supported an amendment to change it to 40 miles per gallon over the same time period, I believe that the enacted standard is a strong step in the right direction. In 2020 alone, the new standard is expected to reduce pollution equal to the operation of 28 million cars.

Additionally, the Energy Bill includes important provisions to increase the efficiency of our light bulbs and federal buildings. Our light bulbs will become 30 percent more efficient, and by 2020, subsequent standards could lead to a doubling of this amount! Shortly after the first standards go into effect, consumers will save an estimated \$6 billion per year and the equivalent of pollution from 24 new coal-fired power plants will be avoided. The energy bill also positions the federal government to lead the way with “green building” techniques, which helps to lower the costs of these technologies and to save the taxpayers’ money from reduced energy bills. More specifically, by 2015, the bill requires a 30 percent reduction in energy consumption in federal buildings.

All of these efforts are a good start, but there is still much to do. I am committed to working with my colleagues to pass a national standard to require electricity from renewable sources of energy, such as wind and solar. I am also committed to pushing for the passage of an energy tax credit package aimed at the residential and commercial level to advance the use of renewable energy and energy efficiency technologies.



TAPPING INTO THE TALENT OF OUR COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

There is no question that our colleges and universities are helping to combat the crisis of global warming as well as devise solutions to this international emergency. That is why I made it a priority during last year's Energy Bill to create a grant program that supports the good work that is taking place on college campuses all across the country. Now, less than a year later, we have such a program.

This program, the Energy Sustainability and Efficiency Grants and Loans for Institutions, supports institutions of higher education, school districts, local governments, and municipal utilities in their efforts to help meet our energy challenges. It does this through four distinct grant programs – technical assistance grants, efficiency improvement and sustainability grants, innovation grants, and efficiency and energy sustainability loans. Taken together, the projects funded through the grants must develop renewable energy facilities, improve energy efficiency of buildings, or promote innovative energy sustainability projects.

One of the most exciting parts of this program is that institutions of higher education must involve their students and local communities in their efforts. Representative Welch made sure that this provision was included in the House version of the energy bill and I am appreciative of his efforts. I am hopeful that Vermont colleges, universities, and other public institutions will apply for grant and loan funding once such funding becomes available.



GO GREEN

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Bernie will send you an email update providing you with a fresh perspective on events as only he can. Go to sanders.senate.gov to sign up.