

# DESERET Morning News

## Energy bill is needless tax burden

By Sen. Howard Stephenson and Sen. Mike Dmitrich

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As members of the Utah state Senate, we followed last year's energy bill in the U.S. Congress with interest, especially the provisions that would have imposed a huge new tax burden on domestic energy producers. This letter is to thank and commend Sen. Robert Bennett for his December 2007 vote against cloture on the bill. It was a narrow victory, and it is now apparent that the Democratic majority in Congress intends to try again to place a new and unjustified tax burden on U.S. energy producers within the next month or so.

President Bush's State of the Union message on energy was strong and realistic. The nation must strive for peaceful "energy interdependence," a blend of foreign and domestic energy, and a blend of energy sources: gas, oil, coal, bio-fuels and renewable sources. It will take the entire spectrum to meet our energy needs over the coming decades. It will take new technologies, such as clean coal and carbon sequestration.

The \$21 billion tax package passed last year by the House of Representatives, then defeated by the Senate, would have done serious harm by stifling production and investment. The proposed taxes would not even go to rebuild our deteriorating national infrastructure; they would simply punish U.S. energy companies and be used on a variety of pork-like, speculative projects favored by some in Congress.

Sen. Bennett's constituents should know that his vote was crucial in removing these unwise provisions and in moving a more realistic energy policy on to final passage and signature. Congratulations to Sen. Bennett on holding firm against excessive taxes and government mandates. We hope the rest of our delegation will join him in opposing these unproductive taxes this next time around.

Energy production in eastern Utah is a growing and important part of our state's economy. We need the jobs and economic development, and our nation needs a robust domestic energy industry to meet future needs and to reduce our dependence on foreign oil. As we encourage Sen. Bennett to continue his good work in supporting our ongoing development, job creation and prosperity.

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*Sens. Howard Stephenson and Mike Dmitrich are members of the Utah Legislature.*

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