

Energy Bill Is Good For SC Families

By Robbie Brunson

At a time when many Americans are having a tough time paying the bills, struggling families need help.

A bipartisan bill called the Energy Savings and Industrial Competitiveness Act—sponsored by a Republican from Ohio and a Democrat from New Hampshire--will help everyday Americans in South Carolina and across the country to save money and better take care of their families.

It will also create jobs—up to 35,000 of them, according to the U.S. Chamber of Commerce. The consulting firm McKinsey & Company has found that going even further- and elevating energy efficiency to a national priority- could produce 600,000 to 900,000 sustainable jobs.

Coming together around common-sense solutions to our nation's energy challenges fits right in with what we at the Christian Coalition of America's South Carolina Chapter are trying to do. Our faith binds us to the values of hard work, living within our means, and doing the right thing for our communities – particularly in these hard economic times. We see energy efficiency as a family value issue.

The bipartisan Energy Savings and Industrial Competitiveness Act will spur the use of commercially available energy-efficiency technologies that can be deployed in every state to save energy in new homes and commercial buildings. Improvements to heating and air-conditioning systems, lighting, electrical and control systems; upgraded pumps and motors; and updates to buildings and facilities eliminate leaks and waste, reduce costs and increase savings. These savings can be passed on to American consumers everywhere, leaving money in families' pockets that can be spent in communities throughout the country, while helping meet other family needs.

Perhaps most importantly, Shaheen-Portman changes the way the federal government does business by encouraging energy-savings practices. This will save taxpayers money. That's good news for families everywhere.

The Federal Government is the largest single consumer of energy in the U.S. It is also one of the most inefficient users of energy, wasting millions of taxpayer dollars on old and inefficient systems – everything from outdated computers to drafty buildings. Washington spends more than \$7 billion annually on building-related energy costs. Government estimates suggest that at least 15 percent of this spending could be avoided by modernizing energy systems in government buildings, which the Shaheen-Portman bill begins to do.

This legislation enjoys strong bipartisan support, including endorsements from the Chamber of Commerce and the National Association of Manufacturers, along with

nearly 250 diverse groups ranging from businesses, trade associations, environmental groups and labor. But it's running into trouble—not because of what it would do, but because of unrelated political and scheduling considerations.

America cannot afford to waste the energy with which this great country has been so blessed. We need a new approach to energy that will ensure a safer, stronger and cleaner America for generations to come. Putting the federal government on an energy-efficiency diet that reduces energy consumption and saves families money is a sensible solution that we can all agree on.

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