

EIGHT TSONGAS ENERGY AMENDMENTS APPROVED BY HOUSE

Congressman Tsongas won approval this year of eight energy amendments which he proposed to the Department of Energy Organization Act, the National Energy Act, and the Energy Research and Development Administration Authorization Act. Working with the Fifth District Science Advisory Committee and two M.I.T. interns, the Congressman authored measures designed to strengthen the nation's plan for meeting the energy crisis expected in the next decade.

As Congress has increasingly concerned itself with the energy crisis and the development of future energy needs, Congressman Tsongas has continued to be actively involved in action regarding energy including the creation of the Department of Energy, consideration of the President's National Energy Plan, the authorization of funds for renewable energy resources in the ERDA Authorization, hearings on the social and environmental impacts of coal, nuclear issues, including the safeguarding of nuclear materials, the formation of an Energy Task Force by the New England Congressional Caucus, and the development of long-term energy planning for the nation and the region.

On August 5th, the House of Representatives passed H.R. 8444, its version of the National Energy Plan introduced by President Carter. Congressman Tsongas, as a member of the Select Ad-Hoc Committee on Energy, appointed by Speaker O'Neill, played an active role in its

consideration. The legislation has been greatly modified by action in the Senate ~~and at this writing~~ the members of the House-Senate Conference Committee which will resolve differences between the versions ~~have not as~~ *is currently* ~~yet been appointed.~~ *meeting.*

Congressman Tsongas was successful in attaching two amendments to the energy bill as it passed the House. The first amendment provides for evaluation of the energy conservation potential of fuel efficiency standards and/or taxes on off-road recreational vehicles. The second, which triggered spirited debate on the House floor, mandates a Department of Transportation study of the conservation potential of bicycles, particularly for commuting in urban areas. Both amendments require that the Secretary of Transportation report to the President and the Congress within one year. Congressman Tsongas has estimated that bicycle use in urban areas, if encouraged by bike-ways, improved safety and education regarding bicycles, and interface with mass transportation might reduce gasoline consumption for commuting by as much as 10%.

A Tsongas amendment to the legislation creating the new Department of Energy strengthened the role of the Assistant Secretary responsible for evaluating the environmental impacts of DOE programs. Four Tsongas amendments were approved by the House in its consideration of the ERDA Authorization for Fiscal Year 1978. The amendments included an accelerated solar-electric cell program, a biomass loan guarantee program, a wind energy system, and an energy educational program.

Solar photovoltaic energy, the direct conversion of sunlight to electricity, has been used extensively during the last twenty years in a wide variety of special applications, but a low-cost solar cell cannot be produced without a substantial long-term market. In order to realistically meet ERDA's goal of photovoltaic systems costing 50¢ per peak watt, procurement must be accelerated. The Tsongas' solar cell amendment authorizes the procurement of \$13 million worth of solar cell systems in FY 1978 in order to increase use of mass production techniques and economies of scale, production efficiencies, a more mature technology and lower unit prices. The amendment provides additional funding for development of an automated manufacturing process.

The Tsongas biomass amendment addresses one of the most ignored energy resources, the tons of waste produced daily throughout the country. Waste material can be exploited as a valuable renewable energy resource. The development of waste-to-energy facilities not only conserves limited energy supplies, but also contributes an environmentally acceptable disposal system for solid wastes. The amendment provides ERDA with loan guarantee authority to facilitate the development of such biomass projects by municipalities and private industry. The wind energy amendment authorizes the design of a large 1.5 megawatt utility-sized wind energy system. The fourth amendment provides for additional energy traineeships in engineering, physical and social sciences related to energy, particularly alternative sources, conservation and conversion technologies. It provides for the training of 500 graduate students per year in these crucial areas and establishes



vocational level courses in solar heating and cooling, as well as conservation, including funding for teacher training and educational equipment.

Congressman Tsongas and Congressman Stewart McKinney of Connecticut were named Co-Chairmen of the Energy Task Force created by the New England Congressional Caucus. The task force is planning studies on the impacts of the energy crisis and the National Energy Act on New England and has begun planning a regional conference to evaluate energy strategies for the region.

The Congressman while noting that the energy difficulties which the nation faces are complex, technical and integrally related to nearly all economic and social issues, has reiterated his belief that, "We can no longer afford to ignore the realities. We face a serious energy crisis and must respond with a comprehensive and coherent national energy policy which emphasizes conservation and the need for the development of additional energy resources (particularly renewable sources). Rational men may disagree on how best to accomplish these aims, but we can all agree that such a plan must be our national priority. Certainly, the consequences of inaction are unacceptable. I have focused my efforts on those areas, particularly relating to conservation and solar derived alternatives which I believe have been most inadequately addressed by present policy."

The Tsongas amendment package was put together through consultation

with the Fifth District Science Advisory Committee, a group of local energy experts established at the Congressman's request to advise him on technological matters and the staff work of two energy interns from M.I.T., Mitch Tyson and John Tylko.

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