

Associated Press

Hawaii representatives back energy bill

December 7, 2007

WASHINGTON — The House approved the first increase in federal automobile fuel efficiency requirements in three decades yesterday as part of an energy bill that also repeals billions of dollars in oil company tax breaks and encourages the use of renewable fuels.

Rep. Neil Abercrombie applauded yesterday's passage of the Energy Independence and Security Act.

The Hawai'i Democrat said the package of legislation is aimed at reducing America's dependence on foreign oil while taking some initial steps to reduce global warming.

Abercrombie said one of the most important provisions of the legislation would require cars to be 40 percent more fuel efficient by 2020.

"This will mean real savings for people in Hawai'i," he said in a news release issued by his Washington office.

"We've seen the price of a gallon of regular gas go from \$1.78 in 2001 to an average \$3.45 a gallon today," Abercrombie said. "Under this legislation, Hawai'i families would save between \$700 and \$1,000 a year at the pump."

Fellow Democratic Rep. Mazie Hirono of Hawai'i also voted for the measure that passed by a vote of 235-181. It faces a certain filibuster in the Senate and a veto threat from the White House.

Abercrombie said the legislation would mandate more energy efficient home appliances and provide assistance to those who want to make their homes and small businesses more energy efficient. There would be tax credits and incentives for conservation, such as solar panels for water heating or the purchase of electric and hybrid vehicles.

"Washington has let energy companies and foreign governments call the shots on our energy policy for years," Abercrombie said.

Democrats characterized the legislation as "a new direction" in U.S. energy policy away from dependence on fossil fuels. But Republicans said the actions amount to government mandates that would lead to higher energy prices.

The bill would roll back \$13.5 billion in tax breaks enjoyed by the five largest U.S. oil companies.

"There's nothing in here that's going to lower gas prices in America ... nothing that is going to help American families deal with heating costs this winter ... nothing to increase production," complained Republican leader John Boehner of Ohio.