

# Congress Daily

## Abercrombie Says Reid Should Stop Playing Blame Game

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KAMUELA, Hawaii -- In an opening salvo to attract support for his bipartisan energy bill, Rep. **Neil Abercrombie**, D-Hawaii, Monday blasted congressional leaders for inaction on energy and urged the nation's sugar growers to get behind the bill so it could be passed in September. "Leadership in both houses of Congress [is] way behind the curve in terms of what people want," Abercrombie told the American Sugar Alliance at their annual meeting for beet and cane growers. "People are tired of sending wealth out of the country. It's criminal the way the politics have been operating." The issue of energy independence, he said, is "equal to the Cold War. If we don't get our hands around the energy cost, we're finished." Abercrombie took special aim at Senate Majority Leader Reid, saying he was sick of the Senate's top Democrat pointing fingers at Minority Leader McConnell. Instead of charging that Republicans are denying him the 60 votes to get a bill through, Reid should fix the problem at the leadership level, Abercrombie said. By the same token, he added, he would not want House Speaker Pelosi telling him he could not bring a bill to the floor and blaming the other side. Reluctance to let a House member bring up a bill is against the nature "of the people's house," he said.

In an interview after his speech, Abercrombie took a more conciliatory tone, saying he believes Pelosi was right in keeping House Minority Leader Boehner's amendment for expanded drilling off the floor because "you can't drill your way" out of the energy crisis. Abercrombie said he hopes he can persuade Pelosi to bring up the bipartisan bill that he is writing with Rep. John Peterson, R-Pa., and others, and that the GOP leadership can be persuaded to abandon their emphasis on drilling. Abercrombie praised Pelosi for bringing up several bills that she voted against, adding he would understand if Pelosi voted against his bill. Abercrombie also proposed that it be brought up on the suspension calendar when it comes to the floor after recess.

Before he left Washington, Abercrombie said, he met with Senate Budget Chairman Kent Conrad, Senate Agriculture ranking member Saxby Chambliss and other members of the bipartisan Senate group working on their new energy plan in hopes of advancing the bipartisan effort in both chambers. But a lobbyist attending the sugar meeting said Conrad and Chambliss have since come under pressure from their respective caucuses -- because both parties feel that conceding too much will hurt them in the election. Abercrombie described his bill as a sensible measure that includes a mandate to release oil from the strategic reserve as well as drill offshore, on public lands, and in oil shale, while pursuing nuclear and coal development. But it would increase conservation and encourage renewable sources of energy. Abercrombie conceded the bill helps the oil industry, but said he has told the American Petroleum Institute lobbyists they should stop

running ads saying that the oil industry does not make as much money as real estate. Abercrombie said the ads do nothing but show people that oil companies have cash for ads.