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NEWS RELEASE

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Similar Goals, Different Approaches
by Senator Larry Craig

Since the November 7 elections, many people have asked me what the results mean for the upcoming 110th Congress. There is no doubt that Democrat leadership will have different policy goals and priorities in a number of areas, but this is not necessarily true of energy issues.

Much the same substance, but different emphasis -- this would be my best guess about the future of energy policy in the upcoming 110th Congress. Energy security through greater independence, and economic competitiveness through more efficient and cleaner technologies -- these were the goals of the bipartisan Energy Policy Act of 2005 (EPAct), which I helped to write, and I expect that achieving these common goals will remain a starting point from which much can be accomplished.

Outside of the bipartisan accomplishments of EPAct, breaking new ground will be as challenging for the new leadership as it was for the past leadership. The 109th Congress found that hurricanes and record high energy prices were not enough to open ANWR or more than a modest portion of our off-shore resources. I expect Democrat leaders will have the same difficulty passing controversial parts of their own agenda.

We all expect hearings on breaking issues and investigations into old ones, but new legislation will be a real challenge. Accomplishments in the next, closely-divided Congress will come from common goals rather than different opinions, and one need look no further than EPAct to see that such common ground can be found.

Members of both parties supported loan guarantees and tax credits for cleaner technologies, incentivized the revitalization of the commercial nuclear power industry, provided a framework for investing in infrastructure, and supported more efficient use and generation of power. Implementing and enforcing these provisions alone would be enough to keep Congress busy for years to come. From these provisions will come the transportation fuels of the future, hydrogen and cellulosic ethanol -- cleaner burning fuels produced domestically to reduce our dependence on unfriendly regions of the world. Democrats and Republicans supported these provisions and I expect we will continue to work together to see that they play out.

The Energy Bill could have just as easily been called the Climate Bill, since it did more to promote cleaner technologies than any tax or regulation could have. Regulating greenhouse gases will

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be a popular topic of the 110th Congress, but if that results in California-style legislation, it would be unlikely to pass either chamber.

A more realistic climate agenda would be to focus on strengthening current clean technologies before prescribing mandates for how clean America should be. Hydrocarbon transportation fuels produce more than half our greenhouse gases; although they are not yet ready to be replaced by cleaner burning fuels, investment in biofuels and hydrogen technologies will move us to that point much sooner.

Cleaner coal technologies will eventually reduce the carbon footprint of more than half of our present electric power generation, but for now, we need to ensure a future for existing emission-free nuclear and hydroelectric power.

Existing low-cost hydroelectric power can and should be relicensed, but it is unlikely to expand beyond its current 9 percent of our energy portfolio. On the other hand, nuclear power has the opportunity to expand beyond 20 percent, to perhaps as much as 40 percent of our nation's generation by 2030, if Congress acts to make sure that the waste will be dealt with responsibly.

A comprehensive nuclear waste strategy should include recycling of commercial fuel and interim storage of non-recyclable defense fuel, requiring at least some acquiescence on Yucca Mountain. Given the new leadership in the Senate, this will not be an easy lift, but without it I cannot see a clear way to reducing our greenhouse gas emissions in a responsible way.

Other renewable energy sources need to make up more than 2 percent of our national portfolio, but they alone cannot make up for losing any of our existing hydro or nuclear power, and they cannot by themselves provide the baseload power this country needs to remain competitive in a global economy. Efficient power production, use and conservation are the most immediate and most economical ways to reduce both costs and environmental impacts.

My hope for the 110th Congress is that we will find enough common ground to keep the country competitive, clean and secure, no matter who is in charge.