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NEWS RELEASE

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Stay Tuned to Energy **by Senator Larry Craig**

Is it just me, or has energy suddenly become mainstream? After three decades of policy work on energy independence and clean energy development, it appears the American public is taking note of energy again. Record high gas prices, Middle East tensions, concern about the environment, and fear of inflation are dominating the headlines like it's the 1970s all over again.

Despite all the talk of what Congress did not accomplish this year, the good news is that we did pass a landmark energy bill, and funded many important energy priorities. All of this just in time for the holidays.

As President Bush signed our bipartisan energy bill to increase car gas mileage requirements and produce billions of gallons of homegrown biofuels, I had reason to be optimistic. When combined with the 2005 energy bill that brought nuclear power back to life, the United States has reasserted itself as the world's leader in the development and production of clean and efficient energy.

For Idaho, the cleanest and cheapest energy state in the country, both bills mean we'll play a bigger role than ever in shaping the country's energy future. Half of the new mandated biofuels, at my insistence, will come from advanced biofuels like the cellulosic ethanol Iogen could produce in Shelley as early as 2009.

Iogen will produce fuels from wheat and barley straw that will emit 80 percent fewer greenhouse gases than conventional gasoline. The plant will be built with loan guarantees I included in the 2005 energy bill and that were just funded in the omnibus appropriations bill. The omnibus bill also provides an unprecedented \$116 million for the Next Generation Nuclear Plant that will be constructed at the INL, along with the other research they do to ensure the safety of the current and future fleet of nuclear reactors.

Idaho's clean energy contributions are numerous: the new geothermal power plant near Malta; the expansion of windpower throughout the state; the solar power manufacturing plant in Pocatello; natural gas from dairy waste near Rupert; and possibly a new nuclear power plant – Idaho is the clean energy state.

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If our quality of life depends somewhat on striking the right balance between energy and the environment, then nobody has a better quality of life than Idahoans. That's why I have taken energy, natural resources, and the environment so seriously throughout my time in Congress. The legislation I have offered and the committees on which I have served have been focused on a single, elusive, yet compelling goal – energy independence.

For a country that relies on foreign sources for more than 60 percent of our transportation fuels, independence is a goal few see as achievable. But my commitment for 2008, my last year in office, is to lead a discussion on what it would take, and what it would mean, for our country to truly strive for independence within the next few decades.

We talked about it in the '70s, but gave up when OPEC lowered oil prices in the '80s. We can't afford to make that mistake again.

For those who don't think we should try, I'll throw out one more optimistic challenge – I believe that we can become independent in a way that is cleaner than today's energy mix, and we can get there without paying more than we do today. It is going to take enormous political courage and compromise, but stay tuned, don't change that dial, because more than anything else, it is going to require the undivided attention of the American people.