Many constituents have written and called my office to express their opinion on the cap and trade energy legislation, H.R. 2454, which narrowly passed the House 219-212 recently. I opposed the bill. These are the reasons why:

First, I was concerned that it could significantly increase the cost of utility bills and gasoline prices for families and businesses in our district and throughout the country. Some estimates suggested the annual cost increase per family could be more than one thousand dollars a year. Given our country is still mired in a serious recession and over 15,000 people a day are losing their jobs, it is unacceptable to add an additional burden on families who are struggling with monthly bills.

Second, this bill was over 1,400 pages long, and numerous changes were made in it shortly before we voted on it in the U.S. House. I believe major, complex legislation such as this with long-term implications for our country deserve to be considered in a more thorough, less rushed process. The fact is that no one knows all of the implications of this bill. For example, I am concerned that the "cap and trade" provisions could create a new type of Wall Street/Enron speculation market that makes billions for Wall Street traders at the expense of American families and businesses. Given what some Wall Street speculators have done to harm our country's economy, the last thing I want to do is to line their pockets with another speculation scheme.

Third, agriculture is still an important industry for our district and country. Since agriculture is energy intensive in its use of diesel fuel and fertilizers, I had a special concern that the cap and trade bill could just add another burden to our farmers and ranchers at a time when they are already struggling with high oil costs and drought. Several weeks ago in a Committee hearing, we found out just how far EPA wants to go in dealing with carbon dioxide emissions. Believe it or not, they actually want to regulate cows' belching. It makes no sense to me that ranchers could be forced into buying global warming allowances from Wall Street speculators in order to allow their cows to belch.

I believe there is a better way than H.R. 2454 to deal with the issues of global warming and reducing our dependence upon foreign oil. Nuclear power does not emit any carbon dioxide and is a safe, reliable source of energy. We need a national energy policy that aggressively supports the expansion of nuclear power. Natural gas is also a relatively clean source of energy, and its domestic production should be encouraged. Public-private incentives to encourage energy conservation along with investments in clean coal technology and renewable energy such as solar, wind and biofuels should be pursued. To reduce our dependence upon foreign oil, I also support development of America's oil and gas in Alaska and off U.S. coastal waters.

Addressing global warming is a laudable goal, but I respectfully disagree with President Obama and Speaker Pelosi on this bill and voted against it because I believe it could cost jobs and hurt the economy, especially in energy producing states such as Texas. I believe my vote was the right thing to do, and reflected the vast majority of views of District 17 citizens.

Edwards represent District 17 in Congress and serves on the House Energy and Water Appropriations Subcommittee.

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