

Space votes to kill Ohio's economy

Our beat is the Buckeye Lake area. There's plenty to keep us occupied and no one matches our coverage. However, occasionally there are national issues of such significance to all of us that we can not ignore them. Last Friday's vote in the U. S. House of Representatives on the American Clean Energy and Security Act of 2009 (HR 2454) is one of those issues as will be the upcoming votes on health care.

The House Committee on Commerce and Energy Report on HR 2454 claims it will "create clean energy jobs, achieve energy independence, reduce global warming pollution and transition to a clean energy economy." If such a fantastic claim were made by a company or person about a product or service, they would immediately face an inquiry from the Federal Trade Commission for "deceptive acts." Those inquiries can lead to civil and sometimes even criminal penalties.

HR 2454 is much more accurately described as "cap and tax." It caps national emissions of carbon dioxide (the same stuff that puts the fizz in our soft drinks and fuels the growth of plant life) at 2005 levels and then forces increasing reductions – 17 percent by 2020 and "over 80 percent by 2050." Reducing carbon emissions is supposed to save us from increasing global temperatures (so-called global warming) which haven't increased since 2001, even with CO² concentrations up significantly. Though proponents have claimed for years that the science is "settled" and have bullied dissenters, it is becoming clearer day by day, thanks to peer-reviewed studies, that the science is anything but "settled." These studies and an increasing willingness of scientists to challenge the proponents' claims are the primary reason for the mad rush to enact the bill and last Friday's spectacle on the House floor. The public, if not the media, is beginning to wake up.

Friday night's vote continued a frightening pattern that is beginning to characterize legislation during the Obama Administration. A 300+ page amendment was filed very late Thursday night or early Friday morning. Representatives couldn't possibly have read the revised bill because as late as 4 p.m. Friday, stacks of papers, yet to be integrated, were claimed to represent the official bill. It's incredible that our Congressional representatives didn't even take the time to read a bill that will turn our economy upside down. The use of energy has made our lives easier, safer, more productive and longer. Now we are going to force major reductions in energy use, but our representatives can't take the time to even read the bill before voting.

Rep. Zack Space, D-Dover, represents most of our Licking County readers in Congress. Rep. Steve Austria, R-Beavercreek, represents our Fairfield and Perry county readers. Space is a member of the Committee on Commerce and Energy. Committee members had four mark-up sessions – May 18-21 – considering 96 amendments of which 36 were adopted. The committee report lists 36 separate roll call votes. Commerce and Energy has 36 Democrats and 23 Republicans. Rep. Henry Waxman, who represents Beverly Hills, Malibu and Santa Monica, introduced HR 2454 and chairs the committee. The long-term liberal Democrat prevailed on every amendment vote. Space, who represents less exotic places like Newark, Zanesville, Cambridge, Coshocton, Dover and New Philadelphia, voted in committee with Waxman 75 percent of the time.

Democrats claim that the financial impact from the bill will be small, using a figure of \$175 a household by 2020. But when given an opportunity in May via Republican amendments to suspend the provisions if they become too costly, the Democrats defeated them. Space supported amendments suspending the program if average gasoline prices exceed \$5 per gallon in the preceding year or if residential electric rates increase 10 percent over 2009. Space either has concerns about the bill's costs or these were "freebie" votes (neither changed the ultimate outcome) to give him some protection from angry voters in November 2010. Space opposed amendments to sunset the act if the average national unemployment rate for the prior year meets or exceeds 15 percent. You read right – **15 percent!** That's a 66 per cent INCREASE over our current national unemployment rate and Space isn't concerned! He also opposed an amendment to suspend the bill if China and India do not adopt limits as tough as our's.

Neither China nor India plans to destroy their economy by reducing their use of energy. Now our manufacturers will have to compete with them with both hands tied. Even 17 months into the worst recession since the Depression, more than 620,000 Ohioans still have manufacturing jobs. Hundreds of thousands of service jobs in Ohio – like trucking, distribution, maintenance etc. – depend on those manufacturing jobs.



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News Deadline - Friday 4:00pm • Advertising Deadline - Monday 5:00pm
 P.O. Box 1542 • 4675 Walnut Rd. • Buckeye Lake, OH 43008
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*Published by Impact Publications
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We've been losing jobs overseas for years and with "Cap and Tax," that flow will turn into a raging river.

Much of our manufacturing base in Ohio is getting on in years. Some companies, faced with huge investments to try to remain competitive, will simply sell their emission rights and then rebuild in China or India where their costs will be much lower.

Hundreds of thousands of Ohioans will lose their jobs and those lucky enough to still have jobs will be struggling with much higher electric bills (most of our electricity is generated from to-be-heavily taxed coal) and high gasoline prices. Higher energy prices will push up all prices.

Don't expect new "green" jobs to bail us out. A definitive study last month on the U.S. Clean Energy Economy by The Pew Charitable Trusts found that Ohio had 32,874 clean energy jobs in 1998. Nine years later, those jobs increased 7.3 percent (less than a per cent per year) to 35,267 jobs in 2007. Clean energy jobs represent a tiny fraction (less than six per cent) of our manufacturing jobs. Thousands of Ohioans won't find work making wind turbine blades, solar panels, biomass reactors etc. Nor will they find work installing or maintaining wind turbines, solar power plants or operating biomass facilities. We simply can not employ hundreds of thousands of Ohioans in clean energy without making that energy incredibly expensive. It is a fairy tale and Ohioans will be among the first to experience the ugly truth.

Space's most important vote came early Friday evening when he sided with House Speaker Nancy Pelosi of San Francisco and Malibu's Henry Waxman. He turned his back on his district's factory workers, farmers, miners, loggers and everybody who supports them for the glitter and glamour of Beverly Hills, Malibu, San Francisco, Santa Monica and West Hollywood. The final vote was 219-212 to enact cap and tax. Forty four Democrats stood up to Pelosi and Waxman and voted for their district's best interest, including Representative Charlie Wilson whose district borders much of Space's. Austria and all but eight Republicans in Congress opposed this job and economy killing bill.

Hopefully, the U.S. Senate will understand the futility of trying to change solar cycles that have occurred for millions of years and how stupid it is to increase energy costs, which create incentives to move jobs overseas, in the midst of a deep recession. As for Space, we hope voters find a congressman next year that will represent Newark and Zanesville, rather than giving Malibu and Santa Monica another vote.