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Senate

ENERGY INDEPENDENCE

Mr. CARPER. I thank my colleague for yielding. Before he leaves the floor, I want to take a moment and thank him for his leadership on another issue. As we have sought to become more energy independent, Senator Dorgan has led the charge, saying maybe part of that would be to practice better conservation. He focused, among other things, on the efficiency of air-conditioners. It may sound like a small thing, but in the scheme of things, it is a big step. I thank him for his leadership on that.

I bought gasoline in my hometown of Wilmington, and I think it cost \$1.77 per gallon, a little higher than it has been in recent months. I read a news account the other day that said we might be looking at prices as high as \$3 per gallon in some parts of America before the end of the summer. We are also hearing a fair amount of concern about the price of not just gasoline but of natural gas. Natural gas is what we use to provide a feedstock for many of our chemical companies. A lot of agribusinesses use it for fertilizers. Natural gas is also the fuel of choice for many of the new electric-generating power plants that are being built across this country.

I want us to go back in time about 4 years to the last year of the Clinton administration. In 2000, the Clinton administration suggested, through regulation that we call

on the makers of air-conditioners in this country to create and begin selling more energy-efficient air-conditioners in 2006. Something was adopted called the SEER 13, seasonal energy efficiency rating. The idea behind the regulation was that, by 2006, air-conditioners would have to be 30 percent more energy efficient than those currently available. We adopted a standard that was implemented and then withdrawn by the Bush administration in the following year or two, and it was replaced by a less rigorous standard.

There has been a court battle over the last year or so, and the outcome is that the court battle has sustained the more rigorous standards, the SEER 13 standard, which says that manufacturers in this country, by 2006, should be producing air-conditioners that are 30 percent more efficient than those available in 2000. That may or may not sound like a very big deal, 30 percent more energy efficient, but I ask my colleagues to think about this. When was the last time we had a blackout during March or April or May or, frankly, in October, November, December? I don't recall one. My guess is that you don't, either. We have them, for the most part, in the summer. We have blackouts, for the most part, when temperatures get hot and people turn on their air-conditioners.

If we begin buying more energy-efficient air-conditioners in 2006, we will do a couple of things: One, reduce the likelihood of blackouts and the kind of calamity they create for our economy; two, we reduce the need to build new electric power plants. Some 48 fewer electric power plants will have to be built because of the higher standard. In addition to that, we will reduce, with a higher efficiency standard for air-conditioners, the emissions of carbon dioxide from our electric-generating plants by 2.5 million tons by 2020.

In addition, if we are building more power-generating plants that will use natural gas, it will have a positive effect on the price of natural gas and, I think, a positive effect on the manufacturing industry in this country.

The second district court has ruled that the Clinton standard—the SEER 13 standard—should prevail. Last week, the association that represents the air-conditioning manufacturers joined, saying they thought they could build and begin selling, by 2006, air-conditioners that met the more rigorous standard.

I hold a letter signed by 53 colleagues, Democrats and Republicans that was sent last week to the President.

It is a letter that simply says: Mr. President, we do a lot of good for our country. We can help ourselves on the manufacturing side. We can help ourselves by building fewer electric-power-generating plants. We can reduce the price of natural gas to some extent. We can reduce the emissions that are coming out of our electric-power-generating plants by millions of tons of CO₂ each year. We can do that, Mr. President, if the administration does not

appeal the decision of the second district court.

If the Association of American Air-Conditioning Manufacturers can say we have the ability to live up to this more rigorous standard, more than half the Senate can say: Mr. President, we believe we, too, have the ability to live by this more rigorous standard.

I am tempted to say let's let sleeping dogs lie. But rather than say that, let's let the more rigorous standard stand. Whether or not we pass an energy bill this year or not—we need an energy policy desperately—I will say one thing: One good component of energy policy in this Nation is conservation. One good way to conserve a whole lot of electricity, particularly starting in 2006, is making sure that when we turn on the air-conditioners in our homes, offices, and buildings, they are meeting the more tough and rigorous standard. That would be a good thing for America.

I ask unanimous consent that a copy of this letter signed by 53 of our colleagues be printed in the RECORD.