

Larson Rejects GOP Gas Act That Rewards Oil Companies, Neglects Consumers

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WASHINGTON, D.C.-Congressman John B. Larson (CT-01) today voted against the Gasoline for America's Security Act of 2005 (H.R. 3893).

"One has to wonder if big oil would be such a wolf if Congress were not such a lamb," Larson said. "Rather than tackling the increased gas prices and home heating costs that millions of Americans now face, this bill throws taxpayer dollars at an industry making record profits."

Larson called the legislation a sham bill that further enriches the oil industry at the expense of American consumers and businesses.

"Republicans have given us an all or nothing bill – all for the oil companies and nothing for the American public," said Larson. "This bill was so bad they had to strong arm their members into voting for it."

Although the the bill passed by a final count of 212-210, the five minute vote was held open for over thirty minutes while Republicans who voted against the bill were pressured to change their votes. The bill failed to get the majority required for passage until the very end, when two Republicans who initially opposed the bill switched their vote.

"The Republican leadership is missing the point on high gas prices. We cannot solve high gas prices by throwing money at oil companies. We need to bring some real transparency into the oil industry and shine the brightest possible light on how these companies – making billions in record profits – are squeezing every possible dollar out of the American people. It's our American families, who are going to have to spend at least \$1,000 extra to heat their homes and fill their tanks this year that need relief, not big oil."

Larson joined with Congresswoman Louise Slaughter (D-NY) to offer an amendment to H.R. 3893 that would have ended the practice of wholesale price discrimination by prohibiting oil companies from restricting the source of a dealer's supply of gasoline. Larson testified on behalf of the amendment last night before the Rules Committee. However, the committee blocked the Larson-Slaughter amendment, and almost thirty others, from consideration by the House.

"The hard truth is that our small local gas station owners are just as much at the whim of big oil companies as the rest of us," Larson said. "They are locked into restrictive franchising agreements that require them to purchase their supply from a single wholesaler. As a result many of these owners, who may own two or more stations in different towns, often have to pay different prices on the same gas on the same day, depending on where their stations are located. Our amendment would have simply freed station owners to find the most competitive and fair market price to purchase their supply and pass real savings on to their customers."

The Larson-Slaughter amendment was based on legislation proposed by Attorney General Blumenthal, who has fought for several years to ban wholesale price discrimination in Connecticut. Larson and Slaughter have introduced their amendment as a stand-alone bill, the Eliminate Price Discrimination Act (H.R. 3964).

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