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Statement of Rep. Henry A. Waxman November 17, 2003

This conference report is a failure. It is a failure in every sense of the word.

This bill is a failure in process. Despite the Republicans' assurances to the press, there has been no bipartisan process on this bill. The House and Senate conferees met on a bipartisan basis just once. This was on Sept. 5 and was for the sole purpose of giving opening statements.

When the Democrats were in the majority we sought a process that would bridge differences among members and regions. This Republican majority is simply trying to steamroll concerns, facts, opposition, or different points of view. And they are doing this to benefit powerful energy industries at the expense of the American people.

This bill is a failure in policy. For years, this country sent Saddam Hussein five billion dollars a year by purchasing his oil. That money purchased the arms that are now killing U.S. soldiers every day in Iraq. And of course, the U.S. would not be in Iraq if not for Iraq's vast oil resources.

But as our servicemen and women make the ultimate sacrifice, Congress is willing to make no sacrifice. We will do nothing to address our dependence on oil. In fact, if anything this bill increases our dependence on oil.

This bill is a failure of justice. California was price gouged by energy companies like Enron, Reliant, and Dynegy. Energy prices increased tens of billions of dollars and ratepayers will remain on the hook for those costs for years to come. This bill does nothing to make California whole, nor does it do anything to prevent a repeat of the corporate malfeasance that started California's economic troubles.

This bill is a failure of principle. For years, there was bipartisan agreement that polluters should pay for cleaning up their pollution. This bill turns that on its head. We must now put up with pollution unless we pay the polluters to stop. This bill shields MTBE producers and oil companies from having to clean up their ground water contamination and pays them \$2 billion.

This bill is a failure to act for our children and grandchildren. This bill does nothing to address the most serious environmental problems future generations will have to face, like global warming and protecting our ocean resources. Instead, it costs the government and the American people over \$135 billion, which our children will ultimately bear the burden of paying.

This bill is a failure. And now there is only one question. Is Congress so broken that we will fail to stop this embarrassment of a bill from becoming law?

Mr. Chairman, I look forward to offering a series of amendments to this conference report. It is doubtful that we can improve this bill sufficiently, but I hope we can strike the worst provisions and improve the most egregious shortcomings.