NIGHTLY BUSINESS REPORT

July 16, 2001 Monday

KANGAS: Energy prices may be down, but the White House is warning this is no time for complacency. Vice President Cheney and members of the Bush cabinet are fanning out across the nation today to stump for the President's energy plan. But as Darren Gersh reports, the market may have the final word.

DARREN GERSH, NIGHTLY BUSINESS REPORT CORRESPONDENT: This was supposed to be the summer of $3 a gallon gasoline. Instead, it's become the season of falling prices. Since June 22, the average price of a gallon of gas is down $0.128 to $1.51 a gallon. Today the President acknowledged the good news is making it harder to sell his energy plan.

GEORGE W. BUSH, PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES: Any time there is not, you know, an immediate problem that's apparent to people, it's tough to convince people to think long-term.

GERSH: Which is why the President sent his cabinet out across the country today to rally support for his energy plan. If anyone doubts the need for action, Mr. Bush reminded them of the warning signs: dependence on foreign oil and blackouts in California.

BUSH: And even though there may not be a brownout today, it is an indication that we need an energy policy. And so we are going to take a very strong effort to convince the American people that we've got a plan that couples not only sound conservation, but the need to develop new sources of energy.

GERSH: But regulators have essentially capped electricity prices in the west, removing the most immediate political pressure for action. Natural gas prices have also been cut in half. Add it all up and analysts say there is now little Congressional interest in a comprehensive energy debate.

KIM WALLACE, POLITICAL ANALYST, LEHMAN BROTHERS: My sense is the temperature on energy policy is very low right now and is likely to remain that way unless we get a crisis this summer. And let's face it, we're halfway through the summer.

GERSH: Back in May, analyst Peter Rigby argued the market was working and energy prices would come down. Now even he is surprised by how fast that happened. But Rigby says consumers should be prepared for more ups and downs.

PETER RIGBY, POWER & ENERGY DIRECTOR, STANDARD & POOR'S: Consumers in a deregulated environment are going to have to get used to the fact that power prices and energy prices are going to spike and they may stay that way for a few weeks, a few months, but they'll come down again.
GERSH: The energy debate isn't over yet. In the next few weeks, the House of Representatives is expected to vote to raise fuel efficiency standards for cars and trucks.
NPR All Things Considered

Call from Republicans for Congress to pass the Bush administration's energy plan
July 16, 2001 Monday

Vice President Dick Cheney and five Cabinet secretaries are traveling through the Midwest and the Eastern states today promoting President Bush's energy plan. GOP lawmakers are busy doing the same in their home districts. They're all hoping to refocus attention on energy policy in Washington, where falling electricity and gas prices and the Democratic takeover of the Senate have slackened interest. NPR's David Welna reports now from the Capitol on Republican efforts to get energy back on the front burner.

DAVID WELNA reporting:

The Republican leadership is clearly feeling frustrated over the response here to what the White House calls the most serious energy crisis since the oil embargoes of the 1970s. Senate Minority Leader Trent Lott complained today of foot dragging on his side of the Capitol.

Senator TRENT LOTT (Minority Leader): We don't have a commitment yet in the Senate as to when we would take up an energy policy bill. It had been my intent to bring it up in the Senate before the Fourth of July recess. Now we're into July, time marches on, and we don't have anything scheduled.

WELNA: Lott praised Vice President Cheney for holding a town hall meeting tonight in Pennsylvania on national energy policy. The absence of such a policy affects, in Lott's words, everything from toothpaste to deodorant.

Sen. LOTT: We don't have policies in place that will have more exploration allowed, that will provide incentives for conservation, that will get more transmission lines in place and more refineries built or additional nuclear plants. We continue to have a growing dependence on foreign oil for our energy needs. I understand it's up to 56 percent now and expected to continue to go up, reaching over 60 percent. That is dangerous.

WELNA: Cutting that reliance on foreign oil is the main argument the Bush administration puts forward in its push to open up the Alaskan National Wildlife Refuge for oil and gas drilling. Interior Secretary Gail Norton told reporters last week that ANWR could produce as much oil as the US consumes in six months.

Secretary GAIL NORTON (Interior Department): The projections are that it could allow us to end our reliance on Saddam Hussein and on those who might cause problems for us. So, you know, it's the kind of thing that allows us to have our energy security and our energy stability.

WELNA: The proposal to open up ANWR is in one of several House bills that GOP-controlled committees are giving finishing touches on this week. House Energy and Commerce Committee
Chairman Billy Tauzin says it's also quite likely this legislation will call for higher fuel efficiency standards, which have been frozen for years at 27 miles per gallon for passenger cars.

Representative BILLY TAUZIN (Chairman, Energy and Commerce Committee): The administration's already on record as supporting it, in fact, calling for an early end to the freeze. No one in our leadership has even mentioned extending that freeze. There appears to be broad support on a bipartisan basis for improvements in fuel efficiency standards in the country.

WELNA: But House Democratic leader Dick Gephardt complains that the recent big tax cuts signed into law by President Bush contain no incentives for people to buy vehicles that get better mileage.

Representative RICHARD GEPHARDET (Minority Leader): As the automobile manufacturers point out to us all the time, it's pretty hard for them to meet new fuel efficiency standards if we're not incenting, or incentivizing consumers to want more fuel efficient cars.

WELNA: Even if the House moves quickly on moving the energy plan into law, the Senate is unlikely to take up an energy bill until after the August recess at the soonest. Minority Leader Lott says the Senate is likely to feel increasing pressure from constituents who are fed up with high energy prices.

Sen. LOTT: They do complain vigorously about the price of gasoline, and even though it's falling they know full well it's going to spike back up again in the future, and probably continue to rise.

WELNA: But as long as energy prices keep falling, the Senate will likely remain a bottleneck for getting a national energy plan through Congress. David Welna, NPR News, the Capitol.
ENERGY TOWN HALLS
REGIONAL MEDIA COVERAGE
Vice President Says Lower Prices Don't Mean Energy Crisis Is Over

By Frank Reeves
Pittsburgh Post-Gazette; Tuesday, July 17, 2001

Despite falling gas prices, an energy crisis continues to loom as "a storm cloud on the American economy," Vice President Dick Cheney warned during a visit here last night.

"We cannot continue to expand without abundant and affordable energy. It's been the foundation of our economy for 200 years," Cheney said during an invitation-only forum at the Boyce campus of the Community College of Allegheny County in Monroeville.

The forum -- dubbed a town meeting on energy -- was part of a daylong effort by the Bush administration to build support for the president's energy plan. Other top administration officials fanned across the country to build support for the plan.

Since Bush announced the plan in May, gasoline and natural gas prices have dropped. Even in California, where record electricity prices and local blackouts captured national headlines for months, wholesale prices for electricity have fallen to their lowest levels in more than a year.

Environmentalists have attacked the plan, saying it relies too much on nuclear power, would encourage gas and oil exploration in pristine wilderness areas and does little to encourage conservation and efficient uses of energy. They also contend that it would do little to encourage wind and solar power and other "green" technologies.


Cheney, suffering from laryngitis and sipping tea throughout the one-hour forum, left much of the defense of the president's proposals to his fellow Republicans.

"The plan ... rightly rejects the false choice that America must be either for energy or for conservation. President Bush recognizes that we must be for both," Ridge said.

Cheney drafted his communications director, Mary Matalin, to deliver the most comprehensive defense of the Bush program.

Matalin said the plan proposes "no short-term fixes or policies as usual." She said it recognizes the need to balance conservation with "conventional production." She said the plan also envisions using the latest high-tech solutions, including fuel-cell and clean-coal technologies.
Ridge's office, which assisted the White House in distributing tickets to the event, said it sought to assemble "a cross-section of Pennsylvanians interested in the energy issue," said spokesman Tom Charles.

But some environmentalists, such as John Hanger, who heads PennFuture, a Harrisburg-based environmental advocacy group, said they were not invited.

"It's their party. But it only demonstrates their lack of confidence in their ideas. They are not interested in a rigorous debate," Hanger said. "[The forum] looks like a political meeting of those sympathetic to the plan in the Republican party."

During the forum, Marilyn Skolnick of Monroeville, a Sierra Club of Pennsylvania member and former Port Authority board member, asked why, if nuclear power is as safe as the administration claims, Bush favors limiting nuclear power producers' liability in the event of accidents.

Cheney said without some protection from lawsuits, it is unlikely electric utilities will invest in nuclear power plants.

"If you are concerned about global warming, about carbon dioxide emissions, you should want more nuclear power plants," he said.

Cheney's office picked the first questioner, Dana Henry, head of the Indiana County Chamber of Commerce, who asked what the administration and business could do "as a team" to bring down gasoline prices.

Cheney said "there's not any silver bullet there" but offered suggestions ranging from reducing dependence on foreign oil to building more refineries. He said by standardizing various "boutique" gasolines -- formulated to meet different clean air standards in different cities -- the nation could reduce the chance of shortages that boost prices.

Cheney said that for the foreseeable future, the nation likely will remain dependent on petroleum for transportation.

The Associated Press contributed to this report.
Cheney sells energy plan

By David M. Brown
PITTSBURGH TRIBUNE-REVIEW
7/16/01

Vice President Dick Cheney said Monday night the United States needs comprehensive solutions to its complex energy issues.

"There is not one silver bullet," Cheney said during a nationally televised town hall meeting on energy staged in Monroeville.

He didn't let reports of falling gasoline prices deflate his fervor for the Bush administration's long-range energy plan, saying that unless such a plan is adopted, U.S. dependence on petroleum imports will accelerate rapidly in the near future.

"We will be subject to control of prices by someone who doesn't wish us well," Cheney warned.

His event last night at the Boyce Campus of the Community College of Allegheny County was part of a major White House push that included Cabinet members fanning out across the nation for similar sessions.

He called for construction of more domestic refineries and a more cautious approach to seeking imported petroleum products, including increased business with oil-producing nations that are not aligned with OPEC.

"In the final analysis, the price depends on supply," he said. "If we don't have the refineries in place, periodically we will have gasoline that is $1.75 a gallon."

Cheney said nuclear power can produce "an abundant supply of good, clean electricity" but utility companies are reluctant to invest in it until regulatory problems and waste disposal questions are addressed.

Cheney, who headed the committee that drafted the energy plan now working its way through Congress, predicted a favorable bill will be adopted later this year.

Bush's proposal seeks a national energy policy that will increase U.S. production of oil, gas, coal and nuclear power. Some critics of the plan used recent falling gasoline prices to question whether an "energy crisis" exists and to challenge the White House's strategy.


Santorum, of Penn Hills, scoffed at a newspaper headline yesterday which he said
declared the energy crisis was over.

"Manufacturing has been flat on its back and declining for the last 18 months because of the energy crisis - you ask them whether there is an energy crisis," Santorum said.

Santorum likened a dip in gasoline prices to a lull in a storm and he criticized Senate Democrats for not addressing the energy issue.

The invitation-only event - broadcast by C-Span - was conducted in the campus gymnasium, packed with more than 200 attendees.

At the entrance, an estimated 70 demonstrators carried signs and joined in chants protesting the energy proposal. A Sierra Club banner read: "Clean Energy not Polluted Power."

Cheney, who had been battling laryngitis during the day, asked his chief political adviser, Mary Matalin, to deliver opening remarks. His voice was strained when he did speak.

Matalin said Bush and Cheney, while campaigning last year, perceived future energy shortages as a gathering storm - "This problem, challenge, crisis, whatever you want to call it."

The lack of a comprehensive energy policy would drain an estimated $600 billion from the economy over the next 20 years, she said.

"There can't be any short-term fixes," she said.

Rebuffing critics who say a new surge of production could harm the environment, Matalin said the White House proposal "really improves and accelerates our environmental protection."

"Fortunately, now we see the prices going down a little bit," Hart said.

But with the consumption of traditional fuels expected to soar over the next two decades, continued U.S. prosperity depends on a successful comprehensive energy plan, she said.

Hart said the nation should invest research money not only in alternative fuels but also in using traditional fuels in different ways.

Specter praised the Bush administration for earmarking millions of dollars for research of clean-burning coal, adding that the billions of tons of coal in the United States could help make the nation less energy-dependent.

Ridge said the Bush plan was "not just about energy. It's about leadership."

"It's not about false choices," Ridge said. "We need to conserve, and we need to
"produce."

This was Cheney's first visit to Pennsylvania since he and Bush took office in January. He appeared earlier yesterday in Philadelphia at the annual meeting of the National Association of Counties.
Protesters criticize energy proposal

By Marc Lukasiak
PITTSBURGH TRIBUNE-REVIEW
7/17/01

For the past week John Flowers has slept in a trailer that uses the sun to keep his drinks cold and his lights bright as he worked his way down the East Coast from Maine.

On Monday, he parked the solar-powered trailer in Market Square during a morning rally at which about three dozen environmentalists and passersby condemned the Bush administration's energy plan.

They said it focuses too much on "old, dirty" energy sources such as oil and coal and ignores renewable and cheaper energy sources such as the sun and wind.

"It's all here, it's all ready and it works," said Flowers, a project manager for the National Environmental Trust, as he clicked on a compact fluorescent light bulb inside the trailer that he said uses a quarter as much electricity as an incandescent bulb.

The trust is a Washington D.C.-based group sponsoring the America's Energy Future Tour, which features the solar-powered trailer that is accompanied by a Toyota Prius, a car powered by electricity and gasoline that gets 52 miles per gallon.

Flowers is leading the tour through 30 cities this summer and was in Concord, N.H., on Thursday for his third stop when he heard Vice President Dick Cheney would be holding a town meeting in Monroeville to discuss the new national energy policy. He added Pittsburgh to his itinerary.

David Hughes, executive director of Citizen Power, an energy advocacy group in western Pennsylvania, said during the rally that the Bush plan increases spending on fossil fuels but hedges when it comes to renewable energy. He said the plan pays lip service to the importance of conservation and renewable energy while cutting funding for such energy sources by 29 percent.

"Don't be fooled by the rhetoric," Hughes said. "It's a supply-and-demand issue. They're proposing all supply-side solutions, but there's not an energy crisis."

Other environmentalists at the rally blamed the Bush administration for crafting an energy policy without inviting them to the table.

"It was proposed as a town meeting," said Morgan Sheets, the local campaign director for Pennsylvania's Public Interest Research Group. "It was a 250-person, invitation-only meeting. That is not a town meeting. They're not allowing us to ask questions or make suggestions."

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Obtained and made public by the Natural Resources Defense Council, March/April 2002
One woman walking through Market Square happened upon the rally and said the points raised by the environmentalists make sense to her.

"Obviously, Bush is thinking with his wallet," said Victoria Hammoud, 40, of Millvale. "I recycle everything. I'm a conscious consumer."
Bush's energy plan hard to sell

By Rick Wills
PITTSBURGH TRIBUNE-REVIEW
Tuesday, July 17, 2001

Six months ago, heating bills caused rage and high blood pressure. Two months ago, soaring gasoline prices angered motorists.

Now natural gas prices are down. And the comprehensive Lundberg Survey that tracks gasoline prices just reported that average prices fell 13 cents over the past several weeks.

Most people are relatively happy about energy costs, at least today.

And that makes the task of Vice President Dick Cheney, who was in Pittsburgh on Monday for a town hall meeting to sell the Bush administration's energy plan, more difficult than it would have been not long ago.

Western Pennsylvania should be receptive to Bush's energy proposals. The area was the site of the world's first oil boom and is among the nation's largest coal-producing regions. In the 1950s, Westinghouse Electric Corp. played a significant role in developing nuclear power for the Navy.

Yet public opinion here generally mirrors the mixed reaction the plan has received throughout the nation - with a few parochial exceptions, such as the region's strong support for the coal industry, which is anathema to environmentalists.

"Earlier this year, price spikes - both with gasoline and natural gas - created concern," said Cliff Shannon, president of the SMC Business Council, which represents some 5,000 small businesses in the region.

But, Shannon said, "People have short memories, and better prices make the president's energy plan a harder sell."

The Bush plan calls for increased reliance on coal and, for the first time in two decades, nuclear power. It also calls for more overall production of fossil fuels. Perhaps the plan's most controversial proposal calls for oil drilling in Alaska's Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.

So far, the plan has evoked a divided - if somewhat predictable - response. To some extent, business favors it. Some business leaders, however, are not convinced of the need.

"Drilling in Alaska is like a poster child for extremists," Shannon said. "Alaska is diverting attention from this plan, which really is one of prudent moderation."
Bush's proposals have drawn the ire of environmental groups in Pennsylvania. And some opinion polls suggest that many members of the public think the plan is little more than payback for big business.

"This is a plan that tries to get people to consume more energy," said David Hughes, the director of Citizen Power, a utility watchdog group in Pittsburgh.

Hughes, a longtime environmental advocate, expressed dismay about being denied admission to the Cheney town hall meeting. Tickets for the meeting were distributed by the offices of Gov. Tom Ridge, U.S. Sen. Rick Santorum of Penn Hills, and U.S. Rep. Melissa Hart of Bradford Woods. All the politicians attending the event were Republicans.

"This is not a town meeting at all - they are rigging admission," said Hughes, who along with other environmental advocates staged protests of the Cheney visit.

Until recently, coal and nuclear power have been moribund industries.

Now, for the first time in more than two decades, Pennsylvania's coal industry is flourishing, said George Ellis, director of the Pennsylvania Coal Association.

And, Ellis said, "Coal has to be at the top of the list to solve the country's energy problems.

Pennsylvania is the nation's fourth-largest coal producer, and most of the mining takes place in the state's western reaches where the industry employs about 7,500 people. Some 60 percent of the state's electric power is generated by coal-fired plants, which the coal association says is higher than the national average of 52 percent.

Despite its grumpy image, coal is now a clean energy source that pollutes at a fraction of the level it did as recently as the 1970s, Ellis said.

Coal also is abundant and cheap, a claim that advocates of nuclear power also use to tout their industry.

PennPIRG, a public interest advocacy group, claims exactly the opposite - not only about nuclear power and coal, but about the entire Bush plan.

"The Bush plan is dirty, dangerous and does not deliver for consumers," said Beth McConnell, PennPIRG's clean air and energy advocate.

Coal is less dirty than it was, said McConnell. "But it is still dirty."

McConnell said that Pennsylvania runs little risk of an acute energy crisis like California's. The Commonwealth is already the country's second-largest exporter of power and faces no prospect of a shortage.
But she said Pennsylvania has one of the highest rates of respiratory illness in the country, adding, "This stems from the heavy use of coal power plants."

PennPIRG cites several power plants near Pittsburgh - among them the Conemaugh Plant in Indiana County, the Cheswick plant in Allegheny County and the Keystone Power Plant in Armstrong Country - as among the state's dirtiest.

Instead of emphasizing development of fossil fuel industries, as the Bush plan does, McConnell favors renewable energy projects such as Pennsylvania's two windpower farms in Somerset and Fayette counties.

Many environmentalists accuse the Bush administration of exaggerating the extent of an energy shortage so that stringent environmental regulations developed over 30 years can be gutted.

"In fact, there is no energy crisis - the real crisis is an environmental crisis," said John Hanger, president of environmental group PennFuture and a former member of the state's Public Utility Commission.

Others, however, deride the environmental movement's emphasis on renewable energy and conservation.

"Wind and solar power are simply not developed sources of energy," said Dick Green, a political analyst who worked for former Republican Gov. Dick Thornburgh.

"The problem with many environmentalists is that they just say no to everything," he said.
Environmental groups argue relying on fossil fuels is a mistake
Critics call Bush plan dirty, dangerous

By Don Hopey, Post-Gazette Staff Writer
PITTSBURGH POST-GAZETTE
Tuesday, July 17, 2001

The 25-foot-long, silver bullet-shaped Airstream trailer parked along a curb in
Market Square yesterday morning looked like the summer vacation home of a family that
had lost its way. In fact, it was a stainless steel example of alternative, energy-efficient
technologies and a backdrop to the start of daylong protests by environmental and public
health groups against the appearance in Monroeville of Vice President Dick Cheney and
a Bush administration energy plan they say has taken a wrong turn.

"The Bush energy plan is dirty, dangerous and doesn't deliver for the consumer. It does
nothing to address either high gasoline prices or rising utility bills," Morgan Sheets,
ergy campaign director for the Pennsylvania Public Interest Research Group, told a
morning crowd of about 50 people that assembled near the Airstream.

The Downtown appearance of the round-shouldered, classically aerodynamic trailer,
retrofitted by the National Environmental Trust with eight rooftop, solar panels that
power its computer, lights, air conditioning and refrigerator-freezer, was the trailer's
fourth stop on a 27-city nationwide tour that began last week in Maine.

It was timed to coincide with Cheney's visit, part of the administration's efforts to
promote its energy plan through a series of photo opportunities and by-invitation-only
town meetings in 20 cities yesterday. Other boosters speaking for the plan included U.S.
Transportation Secretary Norman Mineta in Cleveland, Energy Secretary Spencer
Abraham in Chicago and Interior Secretary Gale Norton in South Dakota.

Sheets called on U.S. Rep. Melissa Hart, R-Bradford Woods, who appeared with Cheney,
U.S. Sens. Rick Santorum and Arlen Specter, R-Pa., and Gov. Tom Ridge on the Boyce
Campus of Allegheny County Community College, to co-sponsor a vehicle fuel
efficiency bill that would raise the miles per gallon minimum to 30.

"That could save consumers $60 million at the pumps and each year save more than 15
times the amount of oil under Alaska's Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, where the
administration wants to drill," Sheets said.

John Hanger, a former member of the Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission and
president of PennFuture, a statewide environmental group, challenged the
administration's claims of an energy crisis and said its energy plan props up old,
pollution-causing energy sources — coal, oil and nuclear — while slashing funding for
cleaner, renewable energy like wind, solar and fuel cell technology.
"Worst of all, the plan shortchanges the fastest, surest and cleanest way to prevent any future energy crisis and today's environmental crisis — conservation and energy efficiency," Hanger said.

Bush's energy plan calls for a 29 percent cut for 2002 in energy efficiency research, development and deployment programs conducted by the Department of Energy.

Jonathan Sinker, a policy analyst with the Clean Air Council, said the Bush energy plan "pays lip service" to alternative energy source development but only commits funding increases to fossil fuel production, including support for oil, coal and gas exploration in environmentally sensitive areas.

"The answer to the United States energy needs lies in energy efficiency and clean, renewable energy," Sinker said. "Having an energy policy that relies on fossil fuel is a giant step backward for the United States."

As part of their campaign against the Bush energy plan, the environmental groups ran television commercials throughout the day in Pittsburgh and other cities and staged a demonstration at the site of Cheney's speech.

PennFuture also paid for an airplane to trail a banner saying, "Conservation works big time," while circling the community college campus. But late yesterday afternoon, federal officials restricted the airspace over the vice president's meeting site, so the plane flew its message over Downtown between 6 and 7 p.m.
VP wants more, cleaner power
Vice President Dick Cheney wants more. More power plants, more refineries, more drilling in search of gas and oil.

But he also wants more conservation, more efficiency and more advanced technologies to make energy cleaner, Cheney yesterday told county officials from across the country at the Pennsylvania Convention Center.

Actually, the vice president didn't say a thing. He was silenced by laryngitis. "He woke up this morning sort of croaking and making some noises, but you really couldn't call it talking," said wife Lynne, who accompanied him to the podium, kissed him and then delivered his speech.

Lynne Cheney, a polished speaker and former chair of the National Endowment for the Humanities, sounded the Bush administration mantra that more energy and a better environment can co-exist.

"President Bush and the vice president do not accept the false choice between more energy and a safer environment," Cheney told the National Association of Counties. Meanwhile, a knot of demonstrators gathered at 12th and Arch streets with signs such as "Got Asthma? Ask Bush" and "Clean Energy Solutions, Not More Pollution." One man wore caribou antlers and a sign, "Arctic National Wildlife Refuge - Don't Drill It."

Inside the center, about 100 conference-goers signed on to a letter urging Cheney to "support a balanced, clean energy plan" and voicing concerns that the administration's planned steps could mean dirtier air, increased oil drilling in sensitive environments, a cut in funding for renewable energy and expanded nuclear power.

Cheney, the president's point man on energy, maintains that a balanced energy plan is exactly what the administration wants.

Lynne Cheney said he and Bush were moving to deal with many energy issues, including expanding the nation's aging power grid to prevent future blackouts. Cheney's report to the county officials stressed the "important changes over the first six months of this presidency." Among them: a tax cut, a growing focus on Social Security, and efforts to boost education across the country. "We are today on the verge of the most significant public school reforms in the last 35 years," he said.
Cheney drew repeated applause when she touted the value of "local control" by government officials.

Though school accountability would increase under the administration plan, "schools will have less dictation from Washington, and more cooperation," she said. From Philadelphia, the Cheneys were to go on to a town meeting in Monroeville, near Pittsburgh, where the environmental group PennFuture blasted the Bush administration energy plan earlier in the day.

"The Cheney plan would increase pollution, despoil the environment, threaten public health and accelerate global warming," said John Hanger, president of the group and a former member of the state Public Utility Commission."
Cheney Visits Monroeville

Reported by Newlin Archinal -- 7/16/01
Chanel 11 - NBC Pittsburgh

Vice President Dick Cheney will be in Monroeville at 7:00 tonight to promote President Bush's energy plan.

But this morning, protestors will stage a demonstration against the policy at Market Square. The protestors say the energy plan isn't an acceptable plan for the environment.

Today President Bush acknowledged his energy plan is proving to be a tough sell, especially now that gas prices are dropping.

The plan calls for new sources of coal, natural gas and oil and says it's necessary to build more power plants and electricity transmission lines. But some environmental activists say good fuel alternatives are already out there and to spread the word, they rallied in downtown Pittsburgh this morning.

A solar-powered trailer complete with a computer and air conditioning; some of the alternatives environmentalists think should be included in President Bush's energy plan.

No more old energy sources. That was the message of an energy rally this morning in Market Square, where local consumer advocates and environmentalists talked to a small crowd and tried to dim the highlights of the Bush energy plan.

Instead of new coal and oil production, environmentalists would like to see a bigger emphasis on energy conservation.

Things like more efficient light bulbs, a hybrid car that is now on the market gets more than 40 miles to the gallon.

Experts say that alone could save consumers millions and reduce demands on the environment.

All points that caught the attention of William Hicks, a Homewood native. His heating bill last winter was a first in many ways.

Hicks says, "I had to do something I never did before, I had to go to the crisis center for assistance. $800 for a heating bill is ridiculous."

Consumer concerns some advocates would like to address at tonight's town hall meeting, but may not be given the opportunity.

David Hughes, Citizen Power, says, "I am the leading energy advocate in western Pennsylvania for 20 years and I am not invited and could not get a ticket to."
No in with the vice president; but maybe an in with the consumer who will be watching the wheels of change.

Hybrid cars or not, ultimately it's an issue that will be decided by voters who may be voting with their wallet.

Here are more details on the energy situation this summer. Gas prices are actually falling, dropping 13-cents in the past three weeks. The average price for a gallon of regular gas is now at $1.46. Mid-grade prices average at $1.57. And $1.66 for premium gas. Those prices are actually less than they were a year ago.
Cheney Holds Monroeville Town Hall Meeting
VP Hampered By Laryngitis

WTAE-TV - PITTSBURGH

MONROEVILLE, Pa., 1:40 a.m. EDT July 17, 2001 -- Vice President Dick Cheney held a town hall meeting Monday night in Monroeville to discuss the Bush administration's energy plan.


Republican Gov. Tom Ridge, a Bush ally, selected the 250 audience members, though Ridge spokesman Tom Charles said that the crowd represented a wide array of views, including at least two environmentalists.

Cheney's office hand-picked the first questioner -- the head of a local Chamber of Commerce, who asked what the administration and business leaders could do "as a team" to bring down gasoline prices.

Cheney offered a prescription that included reducing foreign dependence on oil and building more refineries. But, he said, "There's not any one silver bullet there."

Cheney nursed his throat with hot tea all day, and his voice held out as he fielded nine questions over a half-hour. Cheney was to address a convention of county officials in Philadelphia Monday afternoon. However, he told reporters as he boarded his plane that he had come down with laryngitis. His wife, Lynne, delivered his remarks in Philadelphia.

Outside the Community College of Allegheny County, about 70 demonstrators chanted, "Clean solutions, not pollution!" in protest against the administration plan.

"Nuclear power is not safe, not clean, not reliable, not cheap and not sustainable," said Judith Johnsrud, vice chairwoman of the Pennsylvania Sierra Club. "We don't want any more Three Mile Islands in Pennsylvania."

The meeting highlighted the White House's push to explain its desire to accelerate oil and gas drilling and to build coal- and nuclear-fueled power plants. The meeting is among six hosted by Cabinet members throughout the country on Monday.

The House and Senate both have voted against the administration recently, banning coal mining and oil and gas drilling on federally protected land.

President Bush warned against complacency in the face of falling gas prices Monday. "I think anytime there's not an immediate problem that's apparent to people, it's tough to convince people to think long-term," Bush told reporters in the Oval Office as he plugged the energy plan. "But it's clear there are warning signs" of a crisis, he said.

In May, Bush announced his plan of more than 100 proposals.

He said it starts with conservation efforts. He called on everyone to be conscious of our energy consumption. He spoke of future cars and homes that will rely on different energy sources.

"This dam is a symbol of the new age of environmental possibilities," said Bush. "It's powering Pennsylvania's economy, while at the same time, restoring Pennsylvania..."
wildlife. It goes to show that economic growth and a good environmental policy do not have to be zero sum. It doesn't have to be either/or."

Opposition to the plan was heard Monday. The Pennsylvania Public Interest Research Group planned a Downtown rally in Market Square to denounce the plan as "dirty and dangerous."

The group planned to use a 12-foot inflatable oil derrick to show the Bush administration plan focuses on oil exploration instead of conservation.

The protesters said that the plan is dirty, dangerous and doesn't deliver for consumers, WTAE-TV's Michelle Wright reports.

They also said that it overlooks clean, safe and affordable means of renewable energy and that there is no real energy crisis.

"They want you to think there's a crisis so they can justify the reliance on outdated, dangerous technologies," said David Hughes, executive director of a group called Citizen Power. "The American people are not fooled."

Another protester, John Flowers of the National Environmental Trust, said that renewable power is the direction America's energy plan should go in the future. He backed it up by presenting a compact fluorescent light bulb.

"This is energy efficiency in action," he said. "It only uses 20 watts of electricity. Compared to a regular bulb, it's even much brighter. (A regular bulb) is four times the power, money, pollution and four times the pollution at the plant."
Norton sells energy plan in S.D.

By PETER HARRIMAN
THE SIOUX FALLS ARGUS LEADER
Tuesday, July 17, 2001

Promising future for ethanol, wind, she says

In the heartland of ethanol and wind power, Department of the Interior Secretary Gale Norton said Monday that new technology will eventually give alternative energy sources a prominent place in a national energy plan.

But in the near term, expanding domestic production of traditional energy sources such as natural gas, coal and oil is the primary way to meet the nation’s rapidly growing energy needs.

"Today, we do rely on hydrocarbons," Norton said. "There are a number of things in the works. But you can't say that (beginning) tomorrow, we will not use current technologies."

Norton and Rep. John Thune addressed a town meeting on energy policy that drew about 200 people to the Augustana College Mortenson Theatre. Her appearance was one of several across the country by President Bush's cabinet officials designed to build support for his proposals.

The most divisive proposal for expanding domestic oil production is Bush's goal to open the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge to commercial drilling. Norton said that, in an area in Alaska the size of South Carolina, such drilling operations "would have a surface impact of 2,000 acres."

About a half-dozen members of the East River Chapter of the Sierra Club were at the meeting. They were disappointed by Norton's dismissal of the environmental impacts of oil exploration in the arctic refuge.

"I would like to see her tell me why they have to drill in the Arctic Refuge," Scott Hed of Sioux Falls said afterward. "Ninety-five percent of the North Slope is already available to oil development."

In response to criticism that the arctic refuge oil supply would fuel the United States for only six months, Norton said, "That's a large amount of energy, and we believe there is far more than that."

Whatever amount of oil is available in the arctic refuge, she envisioned it being extracted over a 30-year period and said that would extend the useful lifetime of the pumps and pipeline built to handle Alaskan oil.
"It would keep the same amount of oil coming from the North Slope that we have today."

Alternative energy

Norton said the Bush administration seeks to spur the development of alternative energy sources with tax incentives.

"It will encourage technology to move in that direction," she said. "This will give consumers an incentive to move away from oil."

Thune said Bush is committed to helping alternative energy sources compete against entrenched coal, gas and oil industries and planned to spend $1 billion developing solar energy and $4.3 billion developing fuel cell technology, as well as continuing an ethanol tax rebate.

Norton, too, had encouragement for ethanol producers.

"I'm hopeful there will be a significant opportunity for the ethanol industry. It's on line, and it's moving into being a real force in the energy market," she said.

South Dakota has three ethanol plants operating and six more in various stages of development. The state also has three wind energy projects in development, including one by Clipper Windpower of California, which wants to put 2,000 wind turbines in central South Dakota. That project could be the world's largest when completed.

Responding to interest in such efforts, the federal government this fall will conduct a survey on potential wind, geothermal and solar development on federal land, Norton said.

While the nation is in a cycle of building new gas-fired power plants, improving the efficiency of hydropower at existing dams by retooling turbines, adding new turbines and dredging sediment behind dams can also significantly increase the U.S. power supply, she said.

In addition, nuclear power may have a resurgence. Currently it provides about 20 percent of the nation's electricity. But because no long-term solution for handling nuclear waste yet exists, no new nuclear plants are being developed.

"That seriously ought to be part of the debate on energy," Norton said.

In the next 10 years, U.S. demand for oil is expected to increase 33 percent, natural gas 50 percent and electricity 45 percent, Norton said. An additional complicating factor is that the grid of electrical transmission lines and pipelines for moving that energy "is circa 1950s."
"That's one of the areas we really need to upgrade," she said.

The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission may gain new authority to expedite environmental reviews to build new energy transmission systems in the Bush administration, Norton said.

DM&E impact

Any precedent established there probably won't have much impact on South Dakota's biggest potential construction project, however.

The Dakota Minnesota & Eastern Railroad's plan to rebuild its line across Minnesota and South Dakota and extend it to Wyoming's Powder River Basin coal mines is involved in an extensive environmental review. DM&E CEO Kevin Schieffer, who attended the town meeting, felt there was no link between efforts by the Bush administration to fast-track a new power grid and his own railroad expansion, though.

"If we have to wait until they get that figured out, we're in big trouble," he said.

In the town meeting, Norton was asked about the role of conservation in the Bush energy plan.

"The conservation issue is something we can do and something we take seriously," she said. But she added, "The conservation effort is like going on a diet, You're enthused initially, but then you slack off."

Thune added that Congress has a role in changing a national culture of "complacency and apathy" where energy conservation is concerned.

"We don't know what it is like to do without. We have everything. We don't know what it is like to conserve," he said.

Foreign dependence

Norton fielded an audience question that went to the heart of whether protecting the environment or developing its natural resources ought to be the highest priority of the Bush administration.

"What benefits will my grandchildren get from this plan?" she asked. "I see nothing from it they will inherit but a dirty environment and nuclear waste that will be around for 1,000 years."

She replied that "with 21st century technology, we can find energy and protect the environment."
Thune, though, sought to lend urgency to the effort to increase domestic energy production, especially oil. On the theater stage, he and Norton stood before a series of large charts. One pointed to the huge increase in oil imports since 1973 that has the U.S. importing 10.5 million barrels daily.

He said that with the Bush energy plan, succeeding generations of Americans will inherit "a free country." Without such an effort to reduce the U.S. dependence on foreign oil, he said, "If you want to have Saddam Hussein as Secretary of Energy in America, that's what's going to happen."
Bush advisers try to fire up nation over energy policies

By Stephen Koff and John C. Kuehner
THE CLEVELAND PLAIN DEALER
Tuesday, July 17, 2001

Washington

- With the White House declaring that the nation is "not out of the woods," the Bush Cabinet fanned out to the heartland yesterday to promote a policy of oil and gas exploration, production and conservation.

Transportation Secretary Norman Mineta participated by touring the Rockwell Automation plant in Euclid, where workers demonstrated a prototype of a superconducting, energy-conserving motor. Under development since 1996, the large motor could be used in five to 10 years to run refinery pumps, power plant fans and drive ships.

"With so many potential applications, this motor serves as an excellent example of a new era in America," Mineta said.

Vice President Dick Cheney went to Philadelphia and Monroeville, Pa., near Pittsburgh, to talk about energy, though he was hampered by a bout of laryngitis. His wife, Lynne, delivered the Philadelphia speech.

Also carrying energy messages were Interior Secretary Gale Norton, in Sioux Falls, S.D.; Commerce Secretary Don Evans in Monroe, N.C.; Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Christie Whitman in Old Lyme, Conn.; and Energy Secretary Spencer Abraham in Argonne, Ill.

Gasoline prices have been falling, new electric supplies have been added in California and demand for relief from Washington has softened somewhat. But White House spokesman Ari Fleischer said the energy markets, dependent on foreign oil, remained volatile.

"We still are not out of the woods," he said.

Politically, Bush's energy proposals face several challenges.

The House and Senate have voted to block new coal mining and oil and gas drilling in land designated as national monuments, signaling resistance to Bush's proposal to open the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge to oil and gas drilling.

Although the House Resources Committee might vote this week on Arctic drilling, Senate leaders have vowed to block it.
Senate Minority Leader Trent Lott acknowledged yesterday that there is no commitment "as to when we would take up an energy policy bill."

House members, meantime, have voted to ban oil and gas exploration in the Great Lakes and off Florida's Gulf coast.

Conservation is one area where lawmakers appear to be reaching consensus. Last week, a House energy subcommittee approved a measure requiring more fuel-efficient sport utility vehicles and light trucks.

Environmentalists suggested that yesterday's energy events were displays of hypocrisy.

Bush's proposed budget for next year called for cutting 29 percent from the Department of Energy's energy-efficiency research and development programs, said Christine Patronik-Holder of the Safe Energy Communication Council.

Those programs had provided $10.2 million to help develop Rockwell's energy-saving motor.

A House committee restored Bush's cuts, and the president subsequently said he would work with the House to fund conservation and efficiency research.

Washington bureau reporter Sabrina Eaton contributed to this report.
Energy Plan Defended

By Al Lara
THE HARTFORD COURANT
July 17, 2001

Defending the Bush energy plan in Old Lyme Monday, the nation’s environmental chief urged the public to face the reality of the nation’s energy needs and warned against complacency caused by ample gasoline supplies and lower prices this summer.

"While no rolling blackouts may be part of the reality here right now, they could be here in the near future," said Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Christie Whitman.

Whitman was among a half-dozen high-ranking Bush administration officials and a squad of sympathetic lawmakers who fanned out across the country Monday to try to keep Bush’s energy plan - once on the fast track but slowed by several factors - moving forward.

The EPA chief spoke to an assembly of invited guests at the state Department of Environmental Protection’s marine fisheries division headquarters in Old Lyme. The group included municipal leaders, and representatives of manufacturing and the energy industry. During an outdoor press conference after her address, Whitman spoke over a solar-powered microphone against the backdrop of a salt marsh replete with sea grasses and lily pads.

That didn’t impress two dozen protesters, who chanted a short distance away and waved signs, banners - even a giant inflatable sport utility vehicle - urging energy conservation.

They were even less impressed when Whitman herself arrived at the facility in a hulking SUV.

Whitman, Vice President Dick Cheney and other administration officials hit the road Monday to stump for an energy plan hobbled by the loss of a Republican majority in the Senate, a diminished urgency resulting from the failure of an energy crisis to emerge this summer and a nearly universal opposition by environmentalists.

The president’s plan calls for increased drilling and mining of fossil fuels, the construction of new coal- and oil-burning plants, incentives for the construction of new nuclear-power plants, as well as tax credits and funding for research into renewable energy sources such as wind and solar power.

The Lundberg Survey of about 8,000 gasoline stations across the country reports the average per-gallon price on Friday for all grades of gasoline - tax included - was $1.51, a drop of 12.8 cents since June 22 and 25 cents below the May 18 peak of $1.76. But prices varied widely, from a high of $1.91 in Honolulu to $1.16 in Tulsa, Okla.

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The administration's full-court press Monday came days before Bush is to meet with world leaders in Bonn to pitch his alternative to a global-warming treaty. The treaty was widely supported in Europe but rejected by the Bush administration as yielding minimal benefits at a high cost to manufacturers.

Democrats and moderate Republicans in both the House and Senate have opposed proposals to open national monument land, the Great Lakes and the coast of Florida to oil drilling and natural-gas exploration.

With support eroding in Washington, Bush instead sent his message to the people in "town meetings" to drum up public support.

Cheney spent the day in Pennsylvania; Interior Secretary Gale Norton appeared in Sioux Falls, S.D.; Commerce Secretary Don Evans spoke in Monroe, N.C.; Energy Secretary Spencer Abraham went to Argonne, Ill.; and Transportation Secretary Norman Mineta spoke in Euclid, Ohio.

Whitman appeared in Old Lyme with U.S. Rep. Rob Simmons, R-2nd District, who last year ousted incumbent Democrat Sam Gejdensen.

Whitman spoke at an "energy forum" where many of the 80 seats were filled by invited guests, including local municipal leaders and representatives of the manufacturing and energy industries.

A representative of The Nature Conservancy and some other environmentalists were also invited.

But outside the meeting, Nancy Burton, an attorney representing the Connecticut Coalition Against Millstone, said more vocal critics like her were shut out. But Sarah Kite of the Rhode Island chapter of the Sierra Club said she called ahead to reserve a seat and encountered no problem.

During a question-and-answer session, Whitman chafed at characterizations of the Bush energy plan as environmentally harmful. Of 105 specific recommendations in the proposal, 42 pertain to conservation and renewable energy sources, she said.

"Not having a national energy plan, that's what's had an impact on the environment," Whitman said.
Visiting EPA chief plugs Bush energy plan

Diane Scarponi, Associated Press July 17, 2001

OLD LYME — Christie Whitman, head of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, pushed the environmental side of President Bush's energy plan in a "town meeting" forum Monday attended mostly by officials from eastern Connecticut.

Whitman's visit with U.S. Rep. Rob Simmons, R-2, was part of a national push by the Bush administration to shore up support for the energy plan, but she also took a few moments to be briefed on the Route 11 controversy and other state environmental issues.

Whitman talked up the conservation side of Bush's plan: research into cleaner and renewable energy resources, tax credits for conservation and other benefits.

She also said a national energy plan must continue to include new technology for old fossil fuels and nuclear power.

"Even with the most aggressive conservation efforts and renewable resources that we can see coming online in the future, you're taking about 20 percent of the energy mix," Whitman said. "We are still going to need some of the traditional sources of energy."

The meeting, a few miles from the state's nuclear plants, brought out a few pro-nuclear and anti-nuclear activists.

A group of students at the entrance chanted "What do we want? Clean air! When do we want it? Now."

Whitman defended the EPA's decision to oppose a state bill that would have required six of the most-polluting power plants to meet stricter emissions rules. Whitman said the bill could have left the plants without any emission requirements in times of a power crisis for up to 30 days.

Gov. John G. Rowland vetoed the bill out of concern it could cripple the state's power supply and worsen air pollution.

Tom McCormick, an environmental activist, told Whitman the concerns were not valid. "This is a plain-out distortion and a lie," he said.

An activist from the Sierra Club of Rhode Island, Sarah Kite, asked Whitman to justify a plan to explore for oil in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. She said the plan would "destroy a fragile ecosystem" for only a six-month supply of oil.
Whitman responded that the six-month supply estimate applies to every car, furnace, machine and other oil-using device in the country.

The potential oil supply may be much greater — more than 24 years' worth of oil imported from Saudi Arabia — Whitman said.

New exploration and drilling technology may mean much less impact on the environment, Whitman added, but she said the whole issue must be explored in great detail before a decision.

Whitman was asked to respond to Bush's criticism of the state for rejecting a proposed power line across Long Island Sound. She said she did not know enough about the issue. She said Bush recognizes the power grid is aging and needs to be upgraded.

A state panel rejected the plan because the power line would damage shellfish beds, but the Bush energy report criticized the decision for not having the region's best interests at heart.

Whitman was briefed about the latest efforts to finish Route 11. The road, which was supposed to link New London to Route 2 in Colchester, stops abruptly in Salem and has not been finished because of environmental concerns.

Simmons asked Whitman to consider a new Route 11 proposal that is supposed to minimize the impact to wetlands and to property owners nearby, while building a greenway to buffer the area from future development.

Whitman did not comment on the plan, but she urged state leaders to work with EPA and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to find a solution.
EPA Head In Old Lyme To Discuss Energy Proposals

By Paul Choiniere – More Articles
Published on 7/17/2001
Sean Elliot/TheDay
New London Day

Old Lyme — Christine Whitman, the top administrator for the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, was in town Monday to promote the energy plan of President Bush, a plan the president says is needed to avoid a national energy crisis.

Yet it was the vehicle in which Whitman arrived to make that argument — a Chevrolet Suburban, one of the largest and most fuel-hungry of the sport utility vehicles — that seemed to best illustrate the gulf that separates the administration’s energy plan from its fiercest opponents.

Coincidentally, the two dozen demonstrators who gathered outside the government environmental office at which Whitman appeared used a giant, inflatable mock SUV as the symbol for everything that they feel is wrong with the country’s approach to energy use.

About 80 invited guests gathered for what was labeled a “town meeting” at the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection regional headquarters on Ferry Road. During the afternoon meeting, Whitman emphasized the administration’s position that conservation alone cannot avert an energy crisis. The president’s plan concludes that oil demand will grow by 33 percent, natural gas demand by 50 percent and electricity demand by 45 percent in the next 20 years. That means more pipelines, more power lines, expansion of nuclear power and more oil and natural gas drilling are needed, Whitman said.

Talking with reporters prior to Whitman’s appearance, Janet Niver, campaign director for the Connecticut Public Interest Research Group, urged a far different approach. The environmental advocacy group is calling for much stricter requirements for fuel efficiency on new automobiles. ConnPIRG supports legislation that would require fuel economy of 40 miles per gallon in every car sold by 2012. It also calls for increased funding for the development of energy efficient technologies and alternative energy sources, such as wind and solar power.

Addressing her audience, Whitman said the administration’s approach is to encourage new technologies and conservation through tax incentives and product labeling. Such an approach has been successful encouraging consumers to make energy smart choices, without the heavy hand of federal mandates, she said.
Her appearance with U.S. Rep. Rob Simmons, R-2nd District, was one of many that members of the Republican administration are making this week around the country to promote the president's plan.

Whitman, who demonstrated political pragmatism as governor of New Jersey, hinted that one of the more controversial aspects of the plan, a proposal to drill for oil in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge in Alaska, might fall victim to political realities. When asked about the proposal, Whitman repeatedly emphasized that it would only happen if approved by Congress. Opposition to the idea in Congress is strong and appears to be growing as the recent California energy crisis eases.

Whitman said the administration's plan for greater production and energy efficiency incentives is based on long-range projections and is not a reaction to any one crisis.

Several demonstrators complained about being denied access to the meeting. David Silk of Stonington, who is active in anti-nuclear, environmental and healthcare advocacy groups, was told by EPA officials he might be allowed in if there were extra seats. He never got in.

"This is supposed to be a town meeting? Give me a break," said Silk.

Those who were allowed in did appear to represent a wide spectrum of opinions on the issue. Conservationists, anti-nuclear advocates, business leaders, town residents and government officials had a chance at the microphone during the roughly hour-long meeting.

Robert Link, an Old Lyme resident, expressed concern with the plan's emphasis on drilling and greater energy production and called for more support for conservation and alternative energy sources. Whitman told him that the administration will encourage conservation, but that more production must be part of the plan.

John Alexander, an engineer living in the town, said when it comes to nuclear power the Bush plan does not go far enough. Alexander said U.S. nuclear power has proved to be a safe, clean form of energy production in recent years and called the nuclear waste issue manageable. The country needs an aggressive program of new nuclear plant construction with their improved, safer technologies, he said.

"We can't afford to not be building nuclear power plants," Alexander said. "It's a serious problem when we allow emotional issues cloud the fact that this is the best source of energy for the future."

Whitman said Bush needs the support of Congress to approve a national nuclear waste site at Yucca Mountain. New plant construction will not be supported at the state level until the waste issue is resolved, she said.
Commerce secretary in Monroe

Monday, July 16, 2001
By KENT BERNHARD JR.
The Charlotte Observer

It's a supply-side energy plan.
Donald Evans explains conservation is needed, but won't fuel economy.

MONROE -- America needs more power plants, an upgraded power grid and exploration for oil and natural gas, while increasing conservation efforts, Commerce Secretary Don Evans said Monday.

"It's all about creating the framework (to) develop additional supply, as well as conserving," he told about 120 people gathered at the Union County Chamber of Commerce Monday for a town hall meeting on President Bush's energy plan. "America must lead on this issue."

The Monroe event was one of six similar meetings nationwide, as Bush administration officials fanned out across the country to pitch the plan introduced this spring. Evans came to a staunchly Republican county that voted overwhelmingly in the last election for Republican Rep. Robin Hayes of Concord. Hayes was at the event with Evans.

Evans heard from business leaders and residents about problems caused by rising fuel prices in the past year, and concerns about the future.

Union County farmer Alan Baucom said rising energy costs have put a strain on agriculture. John Roberts, CEO of Union Regional Medical Center, said energy was one of the fastest-rising costs in his business. Don Mallo, senior vice president of Pillowtex, said rising natural gas prices had contributed to cutbacks in the textile industry.

Evans told all three that the administration's plan would help in the long term.

"You have to be looking for new sources of supply and new forms of energy," he said.

Evans said the administration's plan does not include drilling off the N.C. coast at this time.

Bush's energy plan calls for:
Easing permitting for refinery expansion and construction and upgrading the
nation's network of power lines.

Opening part of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge in Alaska to drilling.

Ordering agencies to expedite permits for energy related projects.

Tax breaks for developing clean coal technology.

Tax credits for purchase of energy-saving vehicles.

Environmentalists have said the plan does not stress energy conservation enough and is too heavily weighted toward creating more energy.

In Monroe, members of the Sierra Club said that they didn't get a chance to express their concerns at the town hall meeting. Evans did meet with Sierra Club representatives after the meeting.

"He pretty much gave the party line, and we appreciate him seeing us," said Peter Baker, Sierra Club Southern Forest organizer. But he said the organization has "some real reservations about the energy plan."

Evans said Monday the plan does encourage conservation and clean alternative energy technologies. But he said those measures have to go in concert with developing new energy sources.

"When it comes to future quality of life, you can't separate the three energy, the economy and the environment," he said.