

Bishop, Republicans roll out energy vision

Nuclear » 100 new plants called for; Also oil shale and renewables

By Matt Canham

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Washington » House Republicans unveiled their vision for the nation's energy policy Wednesday calling for 100 new nuclear plants, the expansion of renewable energy sources and fast track mining of oil shale in places like Utah.

The group, which includes Utah Rep. Rob Bishop, say their "all-of-the-above approach" is a more reasonable and responsible way to boost the nation's oil and gas production and reduce the reliance on foreign sources.

"At the minimum it illustrates there is an alternative approach. There are other options out there that I think take us to a better conclusion," said Bishop, a member of the House Natural Resources Committee, and a member of the group that drafted what they are calling the American Energy Act.

The Republican alternative has little chance of moving forward in a Congress where Democrats are in control. The majority party, urged on by President Barack Obama, is pursuing its own vastly different approach to energy.

The House Energy and Commerce Committee recently approved a massive energy bill that would create a cap-and-trade system to spur growth in the renewable energy sector and reduce greenhouse gas pollutants.

The Democratic plan would set a nationwide limit on emissions, known as a cap, and then set up an exchange where businesses could buy and sell pollution credits. A business that pollutes less than allowed

could sell its left-over credits to a company that has exceeded its limit, with some of the money going to the government.

Republicans are vehemently opposed to the bill, calling it "a national energy tax" or as Bishop says "a cap-and- tax" system that he warns could cost jobs.

Instead of regulating emissions, Bishop and House Republicans want to see the government remove roadblocks to allow the creation of 100 new nuclear plants and spur uranium mining on the Arizona-Utah border.

Transition Power Development has proposed a two-reactor 3,000-megawatt nuclear power plant near Green River, but it is a long way from approval.

The legislation also would set up a fund to help expand wind, solar, geothermal and other renewable sources with the money coming from federal oil and gas leases in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge and off the shore of coastal states.

These ideas face stiff opposition from liberal groups who for years have fought against the drilling and who believe nuclear plants are an unsafe alternative.

One issue of particular importance to Utah is the possibility of tapping what some believe are massive oil shale reserves in the mountainous region shared by Colorado, Wyoming and Utah. The Republican bill would lift lease restrictions on federal land, which President George W. Bush tried to do at the end of his administration. New Interior Secretary Ken Salazar, of Colorado, has been an outspoken critic of oil shale development, saying the technology is not advanced enough to economically turn the rock into a usable fuel.

This bill is separate from an all-encompassing energy proposal Bishop introduced in early May, which he calls the American Energy Innovation Act. While the two are similar, Bishop's earlier proposal did not identify a target for new nuclear plants or have a trust fund for renewable energy tied to increased oil production elsewhere.

mcanham@sltrib.com