



Congressman Tim Bishop

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BISHOP DEMANDS ACTION TO PREVENT BLACKOUT REPEAT

Blue Point, NY— One year after the worst blackout in United States history plunged 50 million people into darkness, Congress has taken no action to prevent this from happening again. In a press conference at the Firehouse Deli in Blue Point, Congressman Tim Bishop demanded immediate action to prevent another blackout.

“For the last year, there has been a power failure in Washington, where this Congress has done nothing to prevent another blackout,” Bishop said. “This bill could protect Long Islanders by preventing another blackout.”

Bishop is leading the fight in Congress to allow an immediate vote on HR 3004, the Electric Reliability Improvement Act. This bill would make electricity reliability rules mandatory and enforceable. The US-Canada Power Outage Task Force, which was assigned to investigate the cause of the blackout, called these rules ‘the single most important step’ toward preventing another blackout. In fact, if FirstEnergy, the Ohio utility responsible for the blackout, had followed these industry-recommended standards and shut down a part of its electric grid, the blackout could have been averted.

HR 3004 is virtually identical to language included in the House and Senate energy bills. These energy reliability provisions enjoy strong bipartisan support as well as support from both industry and consumer groups. Unfortunately, the House Leadership refuses to consider the energy reliability language as separate legislation. They insist on keeping these provisions tied to the larger controversial energy bill, which has been defeated in the Senate twice, and includes things like immunity from liability for MTBE manufacturers and large oil and gas subsidies.

“Enforceable standards are supported on both sides of the aisle, and by industry and consumer groups,” Bishop said. “I am going to continue to fight to bring this bill to a vote, and to enlist the representatives whose states were affected by the blackout.”

Bishop has taken the lead on efforts to force a vote on HR 3004. Bishop has circulated a discharge petition, which is a last resort to force a vote. It requires 218 Representatives—a majority of the House—to force the vote. Bishop began the discharge petition in late-July before Congress began its recess, and in just four days, gathered 169 signatures.

“Enforceable standards are supported on both sides of the aisle, and by industry and consumer groups,” Bishop said. “I am going to work very hard and talk to people whose states were affected by the blackout and try to allow a vote on this very important bill.”

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Additional Information on HR 3004
The Electric Reliability Improvement Act

- Introduced by Congressman John Dingell (D-Michigan).
- Would codify the North American Electric Reliability Council (NERC) as the electric reliability organization charged with setting reliability standards and enforcing them through penalties. Currently, NERC does not have enforcement capabilities.
- According to NERC analysis, in 2002 there were 97 “planning standards violations” and 444 “operating policy violations” which would have resulted in \$9 million in penalties had they been authorized at that time.
- Would require NERC to conduct periodic assessments of the reliability and adequacy of the bulk-power system in North America.
- Would NOT give NERC the authority to order the construction of additional generation or transmission capacity or to set standards for adequacy or safety of electric facilities or services.
- Would not preempt any authority of a State to take action to ensure the safety, adequacy, and reliability of electric service within the state so long as such action is not inconsistent with any reliability standard.
- This legislation is supported by the following organizations:

American Public Power Association; Edison Electric Institute; Electric Reliability Council of Texas; National Association of Regulatory Utility Commissioners; National Association of State Energy Officials; National Association of State Utility Consumer Advocates; National Electrical Manufacturers Association; Southeastern Electric Reliability Council; Southwest Power Pool; Western Electricity Coordinating Council; Western Governors Association; and the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association.

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