development of the electricity grid. Moreover, states are allowed to play only a minimal role in determining the location of new pipelines and transmission lines.

The new energy plan is a disastrous special-interest reward to this Administration's polluter friends and does nothing to stimulate our stagnant economy and create jobs.

It lays out no vision for the future of our energy policy and provides no relief for my home state of California as well as the rest of the nation. I strongly urge my colleagues to defeat this conference report and allow both minority and majority sides the opportunity to formulate a better Energy bill for our citizens.

Mr. HOLT. Mr. Speaker, I rise in opposition to the energy conference agreement that has been brought to the House floor today.

As an energy scientist who spent nearly a decade working at one of the nation's premiere alternative energy research labs, I have worked in Congress to help craft a strategy that will provide real energy security for central New Jersey residents and the United States. That's why Congress should focus on the development of better ways to produce and use energy, including fuel cells, wind power, and fusion. We can fulfill the energy needs of a growing economy without compromising our national security interests or devastating our environment.

Unfortunately, rather than leading us into a secure energy future with a lower dependence on foreign oil, this bill merely subsidizes oil and gas companies to do more drilling—a short-term, ineffective solution.

Before I go into greater detail about my reasons for opposing this bill, I want to mention that I am pleased to see that provisions opening the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge to harmful oil and gas drilling have been removed. This misguided policy would have sacrificed one of our most precious public lands for a minimal amount of resources.

What most concerns me about this bill, however, are provisions that will cause unnecessary harm to our environment while doing little to move this country towards a sustainable energy future. This is not an energy blueprint; it is a clumsy collection of special interest goodies.

I am most concerned about provisions that will affect the Jersey Shore, where the environment means a great deal to the local economy. While I am pleased to see that the conferees rejected a provision what would undo the moratorium on outer continental shelf oil and gas exploration, it seems they are still try to do the same thing in a much more nefarious fashion. by mandating a ''study'' of ways to prevent natural gas shortages by estimating holdings in areas currently off-limits, this bill could in effect open OCS areas to damaging seismic exploration.

Other provisions affecting the Jersey shore include giving the Secretary of Interior Czar-like authority to permit energy projects in the OCS, weakening the Coastal Zone Management Act to undermine states' abilities to protect their own coastal environments, and exempting oil and gas construction from stormwater provisions of the Clean Water Act.

New Jersey also has the dubious distinction of having some of the worst air quality in the nation. but it's not completely our fault—prevailing winds carry pollution from the Midwest to our state, causing more asthma, emphysema, and premature death. That's why I am alarmed to see that right after the Bush administration relaxed Clean Air rules, the conferees have given certain cities a free pass to continue to avoid meeting other clean air requirements enforced by the EPA. This hurts residents of the affected cities and of my central New Jersey district—and certainly doesn't help address our energy problems.

This conference agreement also sets a dangerous precedent—that the primary use of our public lands should be oil and gas drilling or coal mining. Mr. Speaker, my constituents own these public lands just as much as any other American, and I'm quite sure most of them believe that we need a much more balanced approach to the use of our public lands.

Finally, this bill is notable for a few glaring omissions. First, it contains no renewable portfolio standard, a provision that would actually move our country towards a sustainable energy future by increasing our reliance on renewable energy. It contains pitiful levels of incentives for creating new renewable energy sources. It also fails to close the SUV loophole, a shameful part of our tax code that gives the wealthy tremendous incentives to continue buying the largest and most inefficient vehicles on the road.

What's worse, the bill does virtually nothing to reduce our prodigious dependence on oil. At a time when it is clear that our dependence on foreign oil affects national security and it is apparent we will never drill our way to independence domestically, we have an energy bill that refuses to mandate greater efficiency. Not only are there no provisions to increase automobile efficiency, this bill could actually undermine current fuel economy standards.

The real failure of the authors of this bill—in their closed, partisan sessions—is that they have not produced an energy bill. We need an energy bill. The country needs an energy bill, one that lays out a rational, coherent energy plan. The world needs us to do this, so that we not foul our earth by the way we produce and use energy. Instead, we get a grab bag of special interest goodies.

Mr. Speaker, I am voting against this conference agreement today because it is the wrong policy for America's future. Rather than leading us into a secure energy future with a lower dependence on foreign oil, this bill merely subsidizes oil and gas companies to do more drilling—a short-term short-sighted solution.

We need a responsible and sustainable approach to addressing our nation's energy needs. On behalf of the residents of the 12th District, I pledge to continue to work towards the development of a balanced, comprehensive energy plan—one that finds environmentally friendly, sustainable ways to decrease our dependence on foreign oil and slow the degradation of our planet.

Mr. WILSON of South Carolina. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to call attention to an issue debated during the Energy Conference, whose time for reform and resolution has come. I am speaking of the Reachback issue, established as part of the Coal Act in the 1992 Energy bill. This insidious tax has caused numerous businesses to fail over the past ten years as a result of its inequitable taking from those that should not have been included in this effort in the first place.

The 1992 Coal Act, as part of the 1992 Energy Policy Act, established the United Mine Workers of America (UMWA) retiree health benefit fund—the Combined Benefit Fund (CBF)—to replace the health care programs that had been created through the collective bargaining process. Not only did the Coal Act require companies who were signatories to the 1988 collective bargaining agreement to pay, but it also retroactively went after companies—referred to as ''Reachback'' companies—that were no longer in the bituminous coal mining business, and assessed them liability for the CBF. These Reachback Companies did not sign the 1988 or later agreements, which were the contracts that guaranteed lifetime healthcare benefits for retired coal miners. Needless to say, the provisions of the Coal Act that created the Combined Benefit Fund were hastily crafted and rushed into law.

This retroactive ''Reachback tax'' has been so crippling for a number of these companies that many have ceased to exist, and the very existence of others continues to be threatened. In order to pay this unfair tax, Reachback companies have had to significantly scale back spending on Research and Development, business expansion (jobs), and economic security.

Many of us in the House, during both the 106th and 107th Congress, pursued legislation aimed at solving the Reachback issue in a comprehensive fashion. We took on these efforts in order to create stability and fairness in the Combined Benefit Fund, and to thereby provide a solution that would address the needs of all interested parties.

I urge the Congress to act expeditiously to provide a solution that will permanently resolve this issue.

Ms. KILPATRICK. Mr. Speaker, one Republican more accurately characterized H.R. 6, the Energy Policy Act, as the ''No Lobbyist Left Behind bill.'' This bill gives $20 billion in tax breaks and subsidies to the oil, gas, coal and nuclear industries. No one has had a chance to look over this bill. I read from the papers that the bill is more than 1,700 pages in length. You can believe that there are many provisions contained in this bill that the other side does not want the public to know. So what better way to disguise this bad legislation than by burying it inside of 1700 pages.

This bill is bad for our national security—it facilitates the proliferation of nuclear fuel. It reverses a long-standing prohibition on the reprocessing of spent fuel from commercial reactors. It promotes, through the Department of Energy's Advanced Fuel Cycle Initiative, joint nuclear research efforts with non-weapon states, and encourages the advancement of advanced nuclear weapons systems.

This bill encourages production over conservation. The conservation provisions are estimated to amount to only three months of U.S. energy consumption between now and 2020.

This bill is bad for consumers as it repeals the Public Utility Holding Company Act (PUHCA). The PUHCA protects consumers by limiting the size and scope of utility companies and subjecting utility holding companies to Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) regulation. PUHCA also required revenues from utility ratepayers to go into electric infrastructure maintenance, instead of risky financial investments like we saw in the Enron case. In fact, it was PUHCA that kept Enron from owning more than one electric utility and prevented their bankruptcy from affecting more