



Congressman Tim Bishop

FIRST DISTRICT -- NEW YORK

NEWS RELEASE

JULY 20, 2004

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**CONTACT: JON SCHNEIDER
PHONE: (202) 225-3826**

BISHOP DEMANDS ACTION TO PREVENT BLACKOUT REPEAT

Offers Discharge Petition to Force Congress to Address Electricity Reliability

Washington, DC— As we approach the one-year anniversary of last year's devastating blackout, Congressman Tim Bishop announced a new push for energy reliability legislation. Bishop started a discharge petition to bring to the House floor a bill that has been called the 'single most important step' to preventing another blackout.

"On August 14, 2003 there was a power failure that began in Ohio and left 50 million Americans in the dark," Bishop said. "But for the last 11 months, there has been a power failure in Washington, where this Congress has done nothing to prevent another blackout."

"My constituents don't care about partisanship and excuses, they want to know what this Congress is going to do to prevent another blackout," Bishop added. "We need to acknowledge the reality that we're not going to pass an energy bill this year, and take real action to prevent another blackout."

Bishop's discharge petition would bring HR 3004, the Electric Reliability Improvement Act to a vote. The bill was introduced by Congressman John Dingell, Ranking Member of the House Energy and Commerce Committee, who joined Bishop to urge Members to sign the discharge petition. While the electric reliability standards have bipartisan agreement, they have been stalled as part of broader concerns with the energy bill. The Congressional Leadership has refused to allow a vote on just the reliability standards.

The bill amends the Federal Power Act to direct the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) to establish by rule an electric reliability organization (ERO). It requires all users, owners, and operators of the bulk power system to comply with reliability standards set by the ERO and approved by FERC. The ERO would then have the ability to impose penalties if those standards are violated. The likely effect of the legislation would be to codify the North American Electric Reliability Council (NERC) as the ERO, which would set standards and enforce penalties.

The US-Canada Power Outage Task Force released its final report on the blackout in April, and called electric reliability legislation the 'single most important step' toward preventing another blackout. Additionally, at a Subcommittee on Energy and Air Quality hearing in April, FERC Chairman Pat Wood confirmed his support for stand-alone legislation if the entire energy bill could not be moved.

"Passing this bill is the most important thing we can do to prevent another blackout," Bishop said. "I hope that 218 members can put their constituents first and bring this to the floor for a vote."

A discharge petition is a last-resort to bring legislation to the floor, when the House Leadership is unwilling to allow a vote on it. A bill is brought for a vote if 218 Members sign the petition.

#