

The congressman advocates conservation and increased production in alternative and traditional areas.

By Joseph Morton

□ *WORLD-HERALD BUREAU*

WASHINGTON -- The United States could break its dependence on Middle Eastern oil in the course of the next decade by pursuing a mix of alternative fuels, conservation and increased domestic oil production, Rep. Lee Terry said Wednesday.

"If we use all of our resources -- alternative and traditional -- we can be independent within seven to 10 years," Terry said. "It will take political compromise . . . but it can be done."

The United States now imports about 14 million barrels of oil a day, but the country has ways to get an additional 21.9 million barrels of fuel a day by 2020, he said.

The proposal is sure to encounter opposition, and the prospects for it being adopted in the immediate future are dim, the Nebraska Republican acknowledged. He said that with gas prices certain to keep rising, however, the pressure on politicians to address the problem will continue to mount.

Terry advocates a healthy dose of ethanol, with 13.5 million barrels a day coming from so-called cellulosic ethanol. An additional million barrels a day would come from stepped up corn-based ethanol production.

The future of ethanol is uncertain. Corn-based ethanol has come under heavy fire from critics who say it's driving up food prices.

Cellulosic ethanol is one hope for getting around the food vs. - fuel debate because it's produced using switch grass, wood chips or other materials that aren't required to feed people or livestock.

But the cellulosic ethanol industry is still in the embryonic stages and has a long way to go before it's economically viable on a mass scale.

Other major parts of Terry's plan call for drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge to produce about 1 million barrels per day, wringing about 2 million barrels a day from the oil shale on federally owned lands in the West and pumping 2 million barrels a day out of the outer continental shelf areas.

Terry also wants to save about 300,000 barrels per day that are now used for power generation by increasing nuclear power capacity. He would rely on better vehicle efficiency standards to save about 1.1 million barrels per day. Terry also said oil companies need to invest more of their profits in drilling and refining operations. Terry said pursuing such a variety of options will lead to lower, more stable prices.

Still, environmental groups are likely to jump on several parts of that plan. For example, opponents of drilling in the arctic refuge say it would negatively affect the polar bears and caribou there and do little to solve the country's energy needs.

Terry said if environmentalists are willing to sit down and work out some compromises, they can get some of their own goals achieved, such as increasing the use of wind and solar energy and forcing oil companies to use the most environmentally sensitive drilling techniques.

