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Rep. Lee Terry (R-Neb.) is hosting a forum Monday with a variety of industry leaders to examine what Congress can do to promote the use of more natural gas in electric utilities and transportation as part of a long-term energy plan he hopes Congress can craft next year.

The forum in Omaha, Terry's hometown, will feature a variety of experts from trade associations, think tanks and companies focused on oil and gas development, electricity generation, transportation, agriculture and other areas.

"The broader plan is hopefully we can start talking about a more comprehensive, 30-year energy plan, and natural gas has to be a key component of that," Terry said in an interview yesterday. "Everyone calls it a game changer -- well, let's define what that means and figure out how it's going to be used."

The expanded use of natural gas in the utility industry, driven by new supplies unlocked from shale formations that have driven prices to 10-year lows, has been among the most dramatic recent developments in the energy industry and has won praise from Democrats and Republicans alike. But efforts to enact new laws aimed at further incentivizing the use of natural gas, such as in transportation, have struggled to gain traction in this Congress.

Terry had been drafting legislation aimed at promoting the use of natural gas as a fuel for heavy-duty trucks and limiting federal regulation of hydraulic fracturing ( [E&E Daily](#) , June 8). That legislation was never introduced, but Terry said it may return next year.

A key question with the potential bill remains what kind of financial incentive should be given to trucking companies to encourage them to switch to natural gas, and Terry said he hoped to hear more about the situation Monday. Among the attendees will be representatives of the American Trucking Associations and National Association of Truck Stop Owners.

Per unit of energy, natural gas costs about half as much as diesel fuel when used for transportation, but trucks capable of accepting natural gas cost about \$60,000 more and access to refueling stations remains spotty, Terry said.

"You know, maybe they come back and tell me, 'If you can ensure supply and access along the interstates, we won't need the incentives,'" Terry said. "So I don't know -- just guessing -- but it's nice to have a more formal discussion than just have somebody come into my office."

Other groups planning to send representatives to the forum include American Electric Power Co. Inc., the American Gas Association, the American Petroleum Institute, the Edison Electric Institute, the Institute for Energy Research and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, among others.