

ENERGY POLICY: WHERE THE U.S. SENATE CANDIDATES STAND

Energy policy has taken center stage in national races, including the U.S. Senate contest in North Carolina. Republican incumbent Elizabeth Dole and Democratic challenger Kay Hagan worked to separate their positions from one another last week even while both supported a proposed compromise crafted by 10 senators. Meanwhile, Libertarian Christopher Cole says Democrats and Republicans have the wrong approach.



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Issues in common	Hagan and Dole support the so-called "Gang of 10" compromise put together by Republican and Democratic senators. Hagan complains that Dole should have made the group a gang of 11, while aides for Dole accuse Hagan of rolling out an energy plan only when it became a hot topic.		Cole takes issue with Hagan's and Dole's approaches, saying the government should interfere as little as possible in the energy markets.
Overall approach	 <p>Hagan</p> <p>Although the Gang of 10 approach includes some offshore drilling, Hagan has focused most of her energy rhetoric on renewable energy and conservation. In particular, she says that North Carolina should invest in new technologies as a way to both become energy independent and create new jobs that can't be sent overseas.</p>	 <p>Dole</p> <p>Dole says she favors a "kitchen sink" approach to the energy crisis, saying the United States should explore every possible way of cutting down dependence on foreign oil. However, she said this week that new alternatives such as wind and solar are years away from making up significant portions of our need and that the United States needs to concentrate on domestic oil production from offshore drilling, drilling in Alaska and extracting oil from shale.</p>	 <p>Cole</p> <p>Cole supports free market approaches to energy policy, saying that the federal government should neither encourage nor discourage certain approaches. And he says that the federal government should loosen regulations so that energy companies and look for oil and other resources in the "most efficient" manner possible.</p>
Using the strategic petroleum reserve to bring down gas prices.	Favors stopping shipments to the reserve but does not favor release oil from the reserve to the market.	Favors releasing one-third of the oil stored in the reserve to bring down the price of gas.	Would abolish the strategic petroleum reserve.
Nuclear power	Supports expansion of nuclear power after safety issues are addressed, such as how to dispose of spent nuclear fuel rods.	Endorses the expansion of nuclear power in the United States. Dole said in an interview last week that she believed safety concerns over spent fuel rods had been addressed.	Favors allowing private industry to create more nuclear power plants. Says the fuel disposal issue is a technological problem, not a political one.
Federal Renewable Portfolio Standard, which would require energy companies to produce or buy a certain proportion of their power supply from sources such as wind, solar and elsewhere	Would support a federal renewable portfolio standard such as one stripped from federal legislation in 2007. Notes that she supported a state renewable portfolio standard created by the general assembly in 2007.	Opposes a federal standard saying that it would make energy more expensive, particularly in southeastern states such as North Carolina that may have been forced to import renewable energy. She also pointed to North Carolina's own legislation saying that a federal measure could have pre-empted the state law.	Opposes government interference in energy markets.
Offshore drilling	Backs the offshore drilling proposal called for in the "Gang of 10" compromise, which would allow drilling 50 miles off the coast.	Early in her Senate career, Dole opposed lifting the offshore drilling ban. Now she says advances in technology make offshore drilling safe.	Favors allowing oil companies to drill for oil where feasible and efficient.
Drilling in Alaska's wildlife refuge	Notes that the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge is not included in the "Gang of 10" compromise and calls drilling in the refuge a "political hot potato" that could complicate the politics of a final deal. That said, Hagan would consider allowing drilling in ANWR if it were part of a comprehensive approach to energy production.	Backs drilling in the ANWR, calling those who oppose such drilling "environmental extremists."	"Absolutely" backs drilling in ANWR.
Energy-related tax breaks for individuals	Includes tax breaks for individuals who buy plug-in hybrid vehicles as part of her energy plan.	Favors tax breaks for individuals who do things such as invest in plug-in hybrid vehicles.	Opposes tax breaks for companies and individuals.
Energy-related tax breaks for companies	Favors ending certain tax breaks that go to energy companies now and transferring the bulk of that money to companies that do research on renewable energy and conservation.	Has signed onto legislation that would repeal tax credits that go to oil companies and create new incentives for renewable energy. But environmental groups and Democrats take issue with her voting record, saying she has voted against measures that would have done just that at least six times.	Opposes tax breaks for companies and individuals.
Support from third parties	Recently endorsed by the League of Conservation Voters, a group that focuses on energy conservation and mainly backs Democratic candidates.	Recently received support from Americans for Prosperity, a conservative "free market" group that receives funding from the oil industry.	Has not been backed by third parties in the race.
The Politics	Dole's campaign attacked Hagan last week for "hypocrisy," saying she has postured on energy issues while her family owns parts of oil and gas drilling operations in several states.	A liberal independent expenditure group last week began running an ad that says Dole took thousands of dollars of campaign contributions from oil companies and says she has done little to ease the gas crisis.	Largely ignored by the campaigns and has not pursued television or other advertising. He has issued a news release on energy policy criticizing Hagan for opposing offshore drilling.
Sources	Interviews last week, energy plan published on her website, additional material provided by campaign staff, the Associated Press.	Campaign material including a blog post outlining thoughts on energy, floor statements from the U.S. Senate, interviews last week, additional material provided by campaign and U.S. Senate staff, the Associated Press.	Interviews with the candidate, news releases.