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On May 21, the full Senate passed bipartisan legislation to combat severe propane shortages like those occurring last winter across the East Coast and Midwest. The Reliable Home Heating Act (S. 2086) was drafted by Senator John Thune (R-SD) and gained bipartisan co-sponsors.

The measure addresses many concerns discussed in a May 1 hearing held by the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee. Witnesses there suggested that changes in seasonal energy use, inadequate pipeline and storage space, and current legislation banning companies from sharing information about propane supplies contributed to the propane shortages, which in turn prompted the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, Congress, and the President to take emergency measures to ensure propane deliveries. If enacted, the bill would enhance state governors' ability to declare fuel shortage emergencies and would require the Energy Information Administration to inform states when specific petroleum reserves drop below historical averages. The measure would also relax federal regulations that limit service hours for vehicles transporting heating oil, natural gas, and propane.

S. 2086 has been reported to the House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, and the House Committee on Energy and Commerce. It will need to pass the full House and be signed by the President before it can become law.

Sources: E&E News, Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee
