national security (weapons research and production). In his first year, Seamans drafted a comprehensive national energy research and development plan and encouraged the early commercialization of synthetic fuels, development of the liquid-metal fast-breeder reactor, research in conservation, solar and fusion programs, and experiments in recovering useful heat from hot dry rock. The Energy Reorganization Act of 1974 required Seamans to collaborate with the Secretary of Defense to decide whether the nuclear weapons programs should be transferred to the Department of Defense or be retained under civilian control. As recommended in their report submitted to the President on January 16, 1976, the Energy Research and Development Administration retained oversight of the military application program. This was partly attributable to the unique capability of the weapons research laboratories to perform significant research in the energy development field.[37]

## Ford Energy Policies 1975-1977

The Nation's dependence on foreign oil imports increased even as the energy crisis eased and gasoline supplies became relatively plentiful. Oil imports, as part of total petroleum products supplied, climbed modestly from 35.4 percent in 1974 to 35.8 percent in 1975, but oil imports accounted for 40.6 percent of the Nation's supply in 1976 and an alarming 46.5 percent in 1977. Meanwhile, domestic oil production declined slightly. In addition, natural gas supplies remained precarious, and the threat of serious shortages loomed in the future.

Energy thus remained a top priority for the Ford Administration. Citing the need for a "national energy plan," President Ford called for decontrol of domestic oil prices. Price controls had been imposed by Nixon in 1971 and extended by Congress in 1973 and 1974. Ford also asked for an increase in fees on imported oil and a comprehensive program of conservation taxes to reduce consumption. On January 31, 1975, he sent to Congress a proposed thirteen-part Energy Independence Act. Following nearly a year of deliberation, Congress produced the Energy Policy and Conservation Act. The act continued price controls on domestic oil into 1979, mandated federal fuel economy standards for new automobiles, and authorized the creation of a one-billion-barrel strategic petroleum reserve. Describing the act as "by no means perfect," Ford stated that it did provide "a foundation upon which we can build a more comprehensive program." The time had come, he added, to "end the long debate over national energy policy."[38]

In his first energy message of the bicentennial year, Ford asked for congressional action on legislation deregulating natural gas, increasing nuclear funding, authorizing private enrichment of uranium, amending the Clean Air Act to ease automobile emission standards and to allow greater use of coal, and authorizing production from the United States Naval Petroleum Reserves. The President concluded his energy message by renewing his proposal to establish an Energy Independence Authority. First suggested by him in October 1975, the Energy Independence Authority would assist in the construction of nuclear power plants, coal-fired power plants, oil refineries, synthetic fuel plants, and other energy production facilities still required in the twentieth century.[39] In late spring 1976, Ford asked the Energy Resources Council and the Office of Management and Budget to prepare recommendations for further reorganization of the government's energy agencies since the Federal Energy Administration would ultimately expire. In August the Energy Conservation and Production Act mandated that the President submit his recommendations to Congress.[40]

Americans also elected a president in 1976. Surprisingly, America's energy policy was not a major issue in the campaign. President Ford and Democratic candidate Jimmy Carter did not seriously clash over energy policy. Both promised that energy reorganization would be a high priority. Carter accused the Ford Administration of lacking an energy policy and proposed the creation of a cabinet-level