

the leaders here around the table know better than me what I'm talking about.

So I appreciate you giving me a chance to come. I told people that I'm almost through, but I'm sprinting to the finish. This is the not the farewell dinner. [*Laughter*] But this is an opportunity to come and listen to what's on people's minds, with the idea of continuing to work with the elected officials to solve problems and make sure this is even better 6 months from now than it is today.

At any rate, I want to thank you. Food's good here too. [*Laughter*] I appreciate your time, Governor. Thank you.

Gov. Barbour. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:28 p.m. at Vrazel's Fine Food. In his remarks, he referred to Maj. Gen. Douglas V. O'Dell, Jr., USMC (Ret.), in his capacity as Federal Coordinator, Office of Gulf Coast Rebuilding.

The President's Radio Address *August 23, 2008*

Good morning. Before they left Washington for their August recess, Congress failed to take action on an issue that is currently of great concern to Americans: high prices at the gas pump.

The fundamental reason for high gasoline prices is that the supply of oil is not keeping pace with demand. To reduce pressure on prices, we need to increase the supply of oil, especially oil produced here at home. So in June, I called on Congress to open up more of America's domestic oil resources for exploration, including offshore exploration of the Outer Continental Shelf. The American people overwhelmingly support this proposal. But throughout the summer, the leaders of the Democratic Congress have refused to allow it to come to a vote.

Now that the pressure to take action has become overwhelming, Democratic leaders in Congress have changed their strategy. Rather than attempting to block expanded drilling by preventing a vote, they are now attempting to block it by bringing up a bill that is designed to fail.

News reports indicate that Democratic leaders in Congress may plan to hold a vote on a bill that would make us more dependent on foreign oil and would likely

make energy costs go up, not down. This bill would raise taxes on energy companies, which would reduce domestic production. This bill would make the Nation more vulnerable to supply shocks by tapping into our emergency supply of oil, the Strategic Petroleum Reserve. And it would impose a rigid national mandate that would increase electricity costs in States where there are few renewable resources.

Democratic leaders know that these counterproductive proposals will not become law. Yet they seem ready to push this legislation as a way to block offshore drilling while appearing to be in favor of it. They need to stop standing in the way of expanding domestic production and take meaningful steps now to address the pain caused by high energy prices.

I've proposed a comprehensive approach to our energy problems that would permit a range of new drilling options and encourage the development of alternative resources. If Democratic leaders will not approve this comprehensive approach, the very least they should do when they return in September is to take action on three commonsense energy solutions that enjoy bipartisan support.

First, Congress should open the way for environmentally responsible offshore exploration on the Outer Continental Shelf. Experts believe that these areas could eventually produce nearly 10 years worth of America's current annual oil production. This exploration is now banned by a provision included in the annual interior appropriations bill. When Congress returns, they should remove this restriction so we can get these vast oil resources from the ocean floor to your gas tank.

Second, Congress should expand access to oil shale, a resource right here in America that could produce the equivalent of more than a century's worth of imports at current levels. Last year, however, Democratic leaders pushed through legislation blocking oil shale leasing on Federal lands. They should lift that ban as soon as they return.

Third, Congress should extend renewable power tax credits to spur the development of alternative sources of energy like wind and solar. They should make these credits long-term and expand them to cover all forms of low-emission power generation, including nuclear power. Increasing production of low-carbon electricity will help us reduce our addiction to oil by allowing us

to power a new generation of plug-in hybrid and hydrogen-powered vehicles.

There is bipartisan support in Congress for all three of these measures. So instead of spending the next month deadlocked on matters where Republicans and Democrats disagree, Members of Congress should come together to pass legislation in these areas where there is agreement.

This Congress has been one of the most unproductive on record. They've failed to address the challenge of high gas prices. Members still have time to take action on this vital priority for the American people. They need to send me a bill next month that I can sign, so we can bring relief to drivers, small-business owners, farmers and ranchers, and every American affected by high prices at the pump.

Thank you for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 7 a.m. on August 22 at the Bush Ranch in Crawford, TX, for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on August 23. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on August 22, but was embargoed for release until the broadcast. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Statement on the Situation in Georgia *August 25, 2008*

I am deeply concerned by today's appeal to President Medvedev by Russia's Federation Council and Duma, the upper and lower houses of Russia's parliament, to recognize the Georgian regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia as independent countries. I call on Russia's leadership to meet its commitments and not recognize these separatist regions.

Georgia's territorial integrity and borders must command the same respect as every other nation's, including Russia's. Russia

agreed, when President Medvedev signed the French-brokered cease-fire agreement, to the opening of international discussions on security and stability modalities in Abkhazia and South Ossetia. This represents an internationally endorsed approach to these issues, which recognition would undercut. Recognition would also be inconsistent with unanimously approved United Nations Security resolutions that Russia has consistently voted for in the past.