

over the last year. He met his developmental milestones. He was talkative. He enjoyed being with people. He interacted socially.

Then Christian received his routine immunizations as recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. His life changed dramatically and rapidly. He received five different shots and one oral vaccine all in the same day. We now know that many of these shots contained the mercury containing preservative, thimerosal. He may have been exposed to forty-one times the level of mercury than is considered safe by Federal guidelines for a child his size. This was on top of other mercury exposure from earlier vaccinations. This issue of having mercury in children's vaccine is a very troubling issue and I intend to continue this discussion in Special Orders every week.

Within ten days of receiving his vaccines, Christian was locked inside the world of autism. Is it related to the MMR vaccine? Is it related to the mercury toxicity? Is it the environment, including food allergies? Or is autism purely genetic?

As with any epidemic, we need to focus significant energy and research on containing it. We need to locate the cause or causes. We need to be aggressive in developing and making available treatments for both the behavioral issues and the biomedical illnesses related to this condition. Last week I chaired two days of hearings to ask experts and public health officials how they have responded to this epidemic.

SHOW ME THE SCIENCE

Some of the scientists and public health officials that have come before the Committee would have us believe that a child's regression into autism within a short time of vaccination is purely a coincidence. However their opinion is not based on scientific evidence, but on their own desire to protect vaccine policy. In fact, our Government has funded very little research looking at the long-term safety of vaccines and has funded no clinical research looking at the potential connection between autism and vaccines.

I don't want to leave the impression that I am an "anti-vaccine" because I am not. Vaccines against serious infectious diseases such as polio and smallpox have saved thousands of lives. I support the use of needed vaccines that have been thoroughly evaluated for safety and efficacy and have been tested extensively.

As Chairman of the Government Reform Committee, I have conducted several hearings on vaccine safety issues and the potential connection between childhood vaccines and the autism epidemic. We have heard from a lot of witnesses on both sides of the issue. One common thread in testimonies of dozens of witnesses is that to date there is a very little research in this area.

Autism and vaccine safety are both very important issues. There is a lot of research that needs to be done to get answers about the causes of autism and whether or not the MMR vaccine and thimerosal-containing vaccines are linked to the onset of acquired autism. Our health agencies can no longer hide their heads in the sand and refuse to acknowledge that we have an epidemic and that in our well-meaning desire to protect the public at large from infectious diseases, that we may have

created this epidemic of a chronic and life-long disease.

REPORT ON RESOLUTION PROVIDING FOR CONSIDERATION OF H.R. 622, HOPE FOR CHILDREN ACT

Ms. PRYCE of Ohio, from the Committee on Rules, submitted a privileged report (Rept. No. 107-67) on the resolution (H. Res. 141) providing for consideration of the bill (H.R. 622) to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to expand the adoption credit, and for our purposes, which was referred to the House Calendar and ordered to be printed.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from the District of Columbia (Ms. NORTON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Ms. NORTON addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. JOHNSON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. JOHNSON addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Mississippi (Mr. SHOWS) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. SHOWS addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. DEFazio) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. DEFazio addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

ENERGY PRICES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Rhode Island (Mr. LANGEVIN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. LANGEVIN. Mr. Speaker, today I am pleased to join my colleagues in addressing the serious issue of rising energy costs.

Today in Rhode Island, the average price of one gallon of regular unleaded gasoline reached \$1.77, almost 5 cents above the national average and a record high in my State.

Thousands of my constituents depend on their automobiles to get to their jobs each day and simply cannot afford the drastic increase in gas prices that they are being forced to pay.

Additionally, this problem has a significant impact on Rhode Island's economy which relies heavily on summer tourism.

Increased gasoline costs threaten to discourage people from summer travel, which would have a disastrous effect on our communities.

Mr. Speaker, we need a solution to this problem now. I have contacted the administration and insisted that any energy strategy that they develop must help American consumers by lowering gas prices.

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Both the President and the Vice President have extensive experience and contact in the oil industry. I am certain that, if properly motivated, they could find a way to lower gasoline prices and bring relief to Americans that have been hardest hit by this price spike.

Our national energy strategy must also incorporate technologies to improve vehicles' fuel efficiency standards in order to reduce our runaway consumption of oil and gasoline.

For example, by requiring SUVs to simply meet fuel efficiency standards of passenger cars would reduce U.S. oil consumption by 1 million barrels per day, approximately the daily estimated oil yield from drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.

Even though the technology currently exists to make our Nation's cars and SUVs more fuel efficient, Congress has blocked the establishment of higher standards since 1995.

Mr. Speaker, I intend to work with my colleagues in Congress to increase fuel efficiency standards, not only to cut our consumption of oil and gasoline, but also to reduce emissions of carbon dioxide, the greatest contributor to global warming.

I am optimistic that the United States will take advantage of our current energy debate to develop a forward-thinking plan for the future. We must establish an energy strategy that addresses short-term and long-term problems, is environmentally responsible, and truly benefits the American consumer as well as the future of this world.

ENERGY CRISIS AND FUEL PRICES

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. GRAVES). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2001, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PALLONE) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, in my district in New Jersey, the average price for unleaded gasoline is \$1.72 this month. The Energy Information Administration report shows that the average price in New Jersey was \$1.14 at

this time last year. This is a 50 percent increase in one year, yet I assure my colleagues that New Jersey is not seeing the worst of the gasoline price increases. Prices in many parts of California are well over \$2, and price fluctuations in the Midwest have been dramatic.

But, unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, when we talk about the energy crisis and the increase in gasoline prices, President Bush's answer has been, and he delivered this just last Friday, he said, "The best way to make sure that people are able to deal with high energy prices is to cut taxes, is to give people more of their own money so they can meet the bills, so they can meet the high energy prices."

Mr. Speaker, I understand that we just heard today that tomorrow President Bush's tax cut bill, the reconciliation bill, is going to come to the floor. But I assure my colleagues that that is not the answer to gasoline prices.

He is talking about a tax cut so that Americans can go out and pay the \$2 to \$3 per gallon price of gasoline. But let us look at this. The President proposes that Congress act quickly to pass the tax cut so the Federal Government can refund American families a modest tax refund so they can in turn put gasoline in their vehicle.

Well, he is not proposing a solution. He is just again displaying a lack of leadership and his alliance essentially with the oil and petroleum industry. What he is proposing with his tax cut is just another way to assist the industry, his friends.

The interesting thing, Mr. Speaker, is that, if one looks at the message that President Bush is delivering today and one compares it to the one he delivered when he was a candidate last year, in January 2000, when heating oil prices were soaring in key campaign States and spot prices were \$27 per barrel, then Candidate Bush said, "What I think the President ought to do is he ought to get on the phone to OPEC, the cartel, and say we expect you to open your spigots."

Well, why is President Bush changing his position. Even today, Vice President CHENEY was out saying he does not support increases in OPEC oil production. The Secretary Abraham was quoted a couple weeks ago saying that he was not going to give into or lower himself, I think the word was, to talk to OPEC about oil production because that would somehow lower his quality, his status as Energy Secretary.

President Bush has also said he will not release any oil from the SPR, the Strategic Petroleum Reserve. Both the Clinton administration and the first President Bush, his father, George W.'s father, successfully released oil from the SPR, from the reserve, to calm energy markets.

In fact, President Bush's decision not to take action, I think, is essentially unilateral disarmament in talks with oil producing countries. We know last year President Clinton was very effec-

tive, I thought, in using the SPR as a tool, if you will, to try to bring prices down.

The other thing that President Bush has talked about as a long-term solution, of course, is to build more refining capacity. But I think he misses the point because it does not help the consumer today. The interesting thing about Bush's policy and CHENEY's policy is that they are not talking about the problem that Americans face today. We have blackouts. We have oil prices, gasoline prices rising dramatically. American motorists are spending too much on gasoline. They want a solution now.

The President talked refineries, but he did not talk about the effect of refinery consolidation. While the number of refineries has decreased, the refinery capacity has increased. Part of the problem that we witness today is this consolidation, is the size of the refinery has increased. Any problem in the refinery, like a fire, for example, that affects production has a greater impact on supply and price.

I just wanted to mention I have a number of speakers tonight who are joining me, my colleagues on the Democratic side. I do not want to take up much more time before I start yielding to them, but I did want to talk a little bit before I finish the introduction here to our special order that we have tonight to mention mergers in the oil industry, because I also think that that is something that needs to be investigated and looked at, and it is not being looked at by this administration.

Recent company mergers include a \$7.49 billion deal in which Tosco recently agreed to be purchased by Phillips Petroleum, and Valero will acquire Ultramar Diamond Shamrock for \$3.91 billion.

In a letter I recently sent along with the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. BARRETT), we requested that the administration, specifically the Department of Energy and the FTC, the Federal Trade Commission, carefully review these mergers to assure that they do not unfairly disadvantage independent marketers.

While mergers like BP and Amoco or Exxon and Mobile may be good for business, I am concerned about the impact on consumers. Exxon-Mobile this year reported \$5 billion in record profits over the last year. Valero alone had a 2,272 percent increase in profits from 1999.

There are real solutions, and Democrats have the real solutions. But those solutions are not found in President Bush's energy plan.

Let me just mention a couple of things that we can do. First, we need to review the effect that mergers have on the price of gasoline. Second, I strongly believe that we need to find innovative ways to reduce demand. Conservation and energy efficiency are vital components of reducing prices of gasoline at the pump, and these ideas must be part of our Nation's energy use strategy.

But, unfortunately, President Bush does not really think about this. Last week, he announced that he would abandon the 2004 goal set to develop a five-person vehicle that would get 80 miles per gallon. The Federal Government has spent \$1.4 billion on this initiative, and last year the National Academy of Scientists called the program an outstanding effort. But now this program aimed at reducing the future demand on gasoline has been put on hold.

American demand for gasoline is 8.6 million barrels per day. Sport utility vehicles, pickups and minivans account for 43 percent of the vehicles on the road today, up from 30 percent in 1990. Because of this increase, the current fuel efficiency in the U.S. has dropped to its lowest level since 1980.

Today the standard for passenger cars is 27.5 miles per gallon, and for light trucks it is 20.4 miles per gallon. This standard has not changed since 1990. We need to address fuel consumption and create 21st century solutions to meet our 21st century users.

I know that a number of my colleagues have been taking the lead on this, particularly some of the newer Members. I know that the energy crisis has been particularly bad in California.

I yield first to the gentlewoman from California (Mrs. DAVIS), one of my colleagues.

Mrs. DAVIS of California. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PALLONE) bringing this to our attention, and it gives me an opportunity to speak particularly about the situation in San Diego.

San Diego families and businesses have been devastated with soaring energy prices since last July, and so now we are faced with rising gasoline prices. Here, too, San Diego was first with the most, not the distinction that we would necessarily like. Prices are almost always 10 percent higher than neighboring Los Angeles. With these prices soaring across the county, San Diego is still at the head of the parade.

Much attention has been focused on issues of supply and demand, and these are important. But there are other predatory practices that crank up the price at the pump.

In August of 1998, as chair of the California Assembly Consumer Protection Committee, I held hearings on the causes of high gasoline prices and why they are so particularly affected in my community of San Diego. We learned a lot during these hearings. We learned about mini-marketing techniques that control the supply. We learned that there are practices where companies sell the same gasoline to different outlets at different prices and discriminate against some communities.

These practices now are being challenged in the Wholesale Motor Fuel Fairness and Competition Restoration Act that is being authored by the gentleman from California (Mr. THOMPSON), and I am very happy to be a co-sponsor of that. There are several

things that this legislation will do, and I hope that my colleagues will join me in working with the gentleman from California (Mr. THOMPSON) on them.

One, they require that petroleum producers reveal their pricing structure. It seems like a sensible thing to do that will be helpful to consumers to know.

Two, it would make it illegal for companies to discriminate on price regardless of who is purchasing it.

Third, it will mandate that the Federal Trade Commission study the relationships between ownership of gas stations and the high price of motor fuel. I think all of these elements of this legislation are needed and will make it more difficult for oil companies to practice what we consider price zoning, redlining, and discriminatory wholesale pricing.

It is only right that consumers know how rebates, refunds, and discounts to dealers affect the prices that they pay at the pump. I think we now have an opportunity and we now should shine the spotlight on how gas is priced so we can then return to competitive pump prices.

Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PALLONE) for bringing these issues to our attention.

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the gentlewoman from California (Mrs. DAVIS), and mention, which I am sure some people already know, that certainly the Democrats today, our Democratic leadership, announced an energy policy program under the auspices of the House Democratic Caucus, our energy task force.

There are a number of provisions in there that I think are very good. But one of them specifically says with regard to price gouging that we would instruct the Justice Department to aggressively investigate energy pricing to assure that illegal price fixing does not occur and to give thorough anti-trust reviews to any proposals to further consolidate energy companies.

I know that the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. GEPHARDT), our leader, was out there with the gentlewoman from California (Mrs. DAVIS) in San Diego, with some of our other colleagues from California, Southern California. We have been basically saying that we have got to look at this problem overall. Price gouging and gasoline prices are an important part of this.

We still do not have the President's or the Cheney proposal. That is supposed to come out Thursday. But so far every indication that we have got from President Bush and Vice President CHENEY is that they simply do not want to do anything about gasoline prices. It is just not their problem. I cannot imagine that, with all the problems that one faces in California with regard to blackouts and the overall energy crisis, that anybody is happy to hear that we are going to not address gas price problem.

Mrs. DAVIS of California. Mr. Speaker, it is really adding insult to injury,

I think, out in the West. When we have seen the energy prices going up 900 percent, people want to know where that is coming from.

I think, when it comes to gasoline prices as well, I know in the San Diego community, we have looked to our neighbors. We do not have to travel that far. I took trips every Sunday when I used to visit my dad actually in Orange County, and we knew where to fill up because gasoline prices were about 35 cents less.

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Now we are seeing high prices throughout the State, but we still have some communities that seem to be affected more than others.

Mr. PALLONE. And in New Jersey we have the phenomenon whereas after Memorial Day, and I represent the shore area, everybody is going to be paying these higher prices when they have to travel to the shore or to the beaches. I know some might say that people do not have to go on a vacation; but obviously, that is not the answer. I just cannot believe that the President and the Vice President simply do not see this as a problem and think that somehow a tax cut is going to help that.

I want to thank the gentlewoman for being here. I know she has been taking her leadership in her home State on this issue. Thanks.

Mrs. DAVIS of California. I thank the gentleman.

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, I now wish to yield time to my colleague from Arkansas.

Mr. ROSS of Arkansas. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding to me.

Currently, Arkansas residents pay on average \$1.69 per gallon of mid-grade gasoline. Thousands of my constituents depend on their cars to get to and from their jobs or on tractors or equipment to tend to their farms each and every day. I live in a very rural district, and they simply cannot afford the drastic increase in gas prices that they are being forced to pay.

With the summer season expected to be as hot as last year, we will probably have in Arkansas a drought for the fourth year in a row, and I anticipate that we are headed for a repeat of last year's overheated oil prices, the highest since 1990. In fact, we have already seen indications that the price is growing steadily.

A recent national survey shows that the price of gasoline has skyrocketed 17 cents in the last 4 weeks alone, bringing the national average to \$1.82 a gallon. These prices are unjustified, and our response to bring these prices down must be immediate. I call on the President and the administration to tell OPEC to increase their levels of oil production, which they cut as recently as March by a million barrels a day. It is wrong that a handful of foreign countries can get together and have a lot to do with dictating the price of

gasoline at the pumps in south Arkansas.

Our reliance on foreign oil has been steadily increasing. We must concentrate on increasing our domestic energy supplies and strengthening our energy infrastructure, and we must guard consumers against potential price gouging by the big oil companies.

Now, the President, as recent as late last week, said that we needed a tax cut to pay for gasoline. Now, Mr. President, I have a problem with my constituents paying \$2 or \$3 a gallon for gasoline. Yes, Mr. President, we need a tax cut. We need a tax cut for working families to help them make ends meet, to help them pay for child care and, yes, to help them send a child to college. We do not need a tax cut to pay for gas. We need to bring the prices of gas back down.

America's economic prosperity and national security have come to depend on the availability of reliable, affordable energy. We need a balanced, long-term energy policy, not one built for the past, as the administration is putting forth. We need a proactive energy policy for the future, one that helps consumers by increasing energy production while reducing energy demand; one that stresses the importance of conservation, building more energy-efficient products and developing more renewable and alternative fuel sources, the kind that can create new markets for our struggling farm families in south Arkansas.

The production, generation, and distribution aspects must all be done with greater efficiency. Research and development in new energy technologies that increase conservation in all areas are imperative. In addition, we need to expand other energy sources, such as wind, solar and hydroelectric. Renewable energy sources may not be an immediate answer to our energy crisis, but they are certainly important for the long term as fossil fuel sources continue to diminish. These emerging technologies will need Federal support if we are to finally achieve energy independence.

We must look at all available options to solve this complicated crisis. But whatever we do, we must guarantee that drivers in south Arkansas and all across America will pay less when they fill up.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back to the gentleman from New Jersey.

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Arkansas. It is really almost incredible to think that the President and the Vice President do not understand what needs to be done now to address the problem with the gasoline prices.

I was just looking at some of the statements that were made here. This is from Vice President CHENEY, May 11, I guess just a week ago, in USA Today. He said, "There's not much we can do in the short-term." And he goes on to talk about everything they are going to come out with, theoretically this

Thursday, is long term. Then it says that they apparently have been warning Republicans on Capitol Hill that the energy policy to be released will do little to help with gas prices or California blackouts this summer.

To me, it is incredible to think that they are not looking to at least talk to OPEC and say, look, do something here. These are countries where I think we have a lot of clout and the ability to influence their policy because they depend on us for so many things. The same thing with the SPR. I cannot believe there was so much discussion last session about the SPR and the ability to use that as a sort of a hammer to force prices down and to force more production of OPEC, and yet so far they are not willing to do it.

The gentleman obviously has the same problem leading up to Memorial Day and the summer in Arkansas that we have in New Jersey, and I just know that a few more weeks of these price increases, and it is already almost the number one issue on people's minds, but I do not know how we are going to be able to go back from Congress and say Washington is not doing anything about it. It is just incredible.

I want to thank the gentleman for participating and we are obviously going to be doing a lot more of this. Thanks.

Next, Mr. Speaker, we have, from my neighboring State of New York, and I imagine he has the same phenomenon with people leaving to go to Long Island for the start of Memorial Day weekend, the gentleman from New York.

Mr. ISRAEL. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for his time and his important leadership on this very vital issue.

Mr. Speaker, last week gas prices on Long Island rose 9 cents per gallon in the span of a single week, and this year alone OPEC has cut its production twice already. I think it is absolutely outrageous that the same countries that we defend time after time are gouging Americans at the pump.

Now, last summer, then Governor Bush said that when he was President, if gas prices increased, he would simply get OPEC on the phone and tell them to turn on the spigot. Well, Mr. President, it is time to make that call. We cannot wait any longer. And when OPEC reconvenes again in June, they have to know that we will no longer tolerate this price-fixing cartel behavior that is punishing Americans at the pump.

At the same time, however, while we are talking a tough line towards OPEC, we have to reduce our dependence on foreign oil. I have been working with some of my colleagues to draft a Tax and Energy Cost Relief Act that will provide working families with tax credits and deductions that will help them purchase energy-efficient equipment and technologies. Now, that is going to reduce taxes, it is going to spur the economy by encouraging people to go

and purchase new energy-efficient products, it is going to improve our environment, and it is going to reduce our long-term dependence on foreign oil.

Taking a hard line with OPEC and expanding tax incentives is the smart way to reduce the price of gas while providing relief to working families and decreasing our dependence on foreign oil. It is time for a coherent, effective, comprehensive policy to get gas prices down; and I look forward to working with the gentleman from New Jersey to reach that goal.

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from New York. I know we are both in the New York metropolitan area, so we share the same concerns and we hear the same complaints from our constituents.

I just wanted to mention, if I could, that the Democrats' energy policy paper was released today, wherein our leader, the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. GEPHARDT), and the gentleman from Texas (Mr. FROST), who is the chairman of the caucus and also the chairman of the task force that put this together, talked about two major tax credits along the lines of what the gentleman just discussed; and I wanted to mention them briefly, if I could.

There is this best energy savings tax credit, which is basically a consumer tax credit for up to \$4,000 provided for new homes, in other words, a \$4,000 credit for purchase of a new home based on the energy efficiency of the new home. And then similarly with regard to home improvements, 20 percent of the cost up to \$2,000 based on the measures taken by the consumer. And there is a separate one for vehicles that an individual could get a credit up to \$4,000 based on fuel savings or other performance standards when they purchase a car or a light truck or SUV equipped with these new fuel saving technologies.

And then for businesses, the Democratic proposal has what they call a SAVE incentive, structure and vehicle efficiency tax incentive; and this provides up to a 30 percent investment tax credit for business investment in renewable energy generation and allows businesses to take a deduction for increasing energy efficiency.

These are the kinds of conservation measures linked to new technology that we need, and I know that is what the gentleman was talking about. And I think the great part of what the Democrats put forward today in our energy proposal is that it deals with the high price of gasoline, which is an immediate concern; it deals with conservation; it deals with efforts to use tax credits and deductions for conservation; and, at the same time, it has measures to increase energy production.

So we are looking at this universally, in a sort of a well-rounded way, whereas all we get from the Bush-Cheney administration is just pump; let us pump more oil, let us pump more, and that is

going to solve all our problems. But that is not going to solve our problems, particularly in the short term.

Mr. ISRAEL. If the gentleman will yield, about 2 weeks ago, five Federal laboratories issued a report that said if we can encourage weatherization and encourage energy-efficient technologies and energy-efficient consumer products, we will not have to build the 1,300 power plants that the administration is proposing; that we would not have to drill the Arctic reserve that the administration is proposing; we would not have to degrade our environment. And those are the kinds of technologies and efficiencies that we ought to be pursuing.

Now, these were not Democratic Federal laboratories or Republican Federal laboratories; they were Federal laboratories that have been looking at this, and we need to heed their advice.

Mr. PALLONE. The amazing thing that I find is that even my own utilities, during Earth Day myself and my other Democratic colleagues in the House did a bus tour around the State, and one of the places we went, I think it was in the district of the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PAYNE), was a generating facility in Linden, which was building a new plant that would reduce carbon dioxide and other emissions by 30 percent.

Here are these utilities, and this is the business community, telling us that they can address carbon dioxide emissions effectively at the same time that the Bush administration tells us they do not want to regulate it. So the President is just not being realistic about what can be done. He is sort of living in the past, in my opinion; and it is very unfortunate.

I want to thank the gentleman.

Mr. ISRAEL. I thank the gentleman.

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, next is my colleague on the Committee on Commerce who has been involved in these energy issues for a long time, and I know that our committee has taken up some legislation, but so far the Republicans have not really been helping us very much in terms of addressing the California situation. I yield to my colleague from Ohio.

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Mr. STRICKLAND. Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from New Jersey (Mr. PALLONE), and I would like to take a few moments to talk about my district in southern Ohio, because as I have heard my colleagues discuss gas prices in their districts, I was thinking gas prices are so much higher in my poor, rural district.

But first, I would like to say some things about the President and his justification for this tax cut, 43 percent of which will be going to the richest 1 percent of the people in our country. Last summer during the campaign he said we needed this large tax cut simply because we had a huge surplus, and this surplus, rather than being spent on government programs, should be returned to the taxpayer. That was the justification a year or so ago.

Then just 2 or 3 months ago, he was justifying this huge tax break, most of which is going to the very wealthy, by saying our economy is entering a period of slump and perhaps moving into a recession, so we need a tax break to generate activity within our economy and keep us from going into a recession. Lo and behold a couple of days ago I was flabbergasted to hear the President say we need a tax cut so people can spend it on gasoline so that my friends in the oil industry can reap the benefits of the tax cut, basically. It is just beyond belief that we would have such shallow, superficial thinking going on when the Nation is facing a very serious problem.

My colleague said he thinks this concern about gas prices may be near the top of people's concerns. I can tell my colleagues after having gone home to southern Ohio for the last several weekends, in my district it is the primary concern. I can go nowhere in my district without meeting people who are saying to me, Congressman, what can you do about these gasoline prices?

I can tell you this weekend the cheapest gasoline I could find in southern Ohio was nearly \$1.86 per gallon. That was for the cheapest grade, and the premium was over \$2 a gallon.

Mr. Speaker, another thing that troubles me, these prices fluctuate overnight. Especially as we move toward the weekend, this happens regularly. As we are moving toward the weekend on Thursday night or Friday morning, prices may escalate 10 or 15 cents or more overnight. This happens weekend after weekend.

Now, the American people are fairly wise, and they know when they are being taken advantage of. I believe that there is a quiet but growing anger throughout this country. Those of us in political office who are supposed to be representatives of the people are going to pay a heavy price if we do not deal with this issue. The American people are being gouged. They are being charged unfair prices, and they feel hopeless and helpless; and they are looking to Washington for some relief.

Mr. Speaker, to have the President say there is nothing we can do, to have the Vice President say there is nothing we can do is not acceptable. We must do something. I have been trying to search for solutions. I think we should even consider the possibility of a windfall profit tax to be levied on these companies that are gouging the American public.

Last summer in the early summer, myself and the two Senators from Ohio, Senator VOINOVICH and Senator DEWINE, both Republican Senators, met with the Federal Trade Commission. We were concerned at that time with what was happening with escalating gasoline prices, and we asked them to look into the situation and try to determine if something illegal was happening, if collusion was occurring between the oil companies.

Finally, after several months of looking at this, they came out with a re-

port. The report stated that it was not possible for them to establish indications of collusion which would be illegal, but that there was some strong indication that some of these companies were purposefully withholding supplies in an effort to drive up prices.

Now, I want to say a word about supply. I do not like the fact that OPEC has cut back on supplies. The fact is we used our national resources, we put our sons and daughters in danger to protect Kuwait and to keep that part of the world relatively free of the threat of Saddam Hussein. We are supposed to be friendly with Mexico. It troubles me that these companies that use our support and use our protection and use our resources, when they find themselves in need would be so terribly insensitive to the situation facing this country that they would cut back on supplies.

But it troubles me even more, Mr. Speaker, that our President is unwilling to expect something out of these OPEC nations that we as a Nation have a right to suspect. It troubles me that he will not urge and insist that they increase their production. Having said that, I suspect that the problem is not a supply problem right now in the immediate future, but the problem is a pricing problem. I do not see any stations running out of gasoline or lines of people waiting to get gasoline. We can buy as much gasoline in southern Ohio as we are willing to pay for. The problem is that we are simply being charged too much.

Mr. Speaker, I believe there will be a price to pay, regardless of whether or not we are Democrats or Republicans, or from what part of the country we come. If we do not do something to give relief to the American public, the American public has every right to seek retribution against us at the polls. The American people are patient and tolerant, and I think they are wise; but they also get tired, and there is a line beyond which we must not cross. We owe them protection.

I urge the President, I urge the leadership of this House to assume the responsibility that we rightfully have as representatives of the people and think of the various ways in which we can take action to bring some immediate relief this spring, this summer to the American people.

I wanted to share those thoughts with my colleagues, Mr. Speaker, because I know that the American people are paying attention to what we are doing up here, and I think they are also paying attention to what we are not doing up here. I urge all of my colleagues to address all of these issues.

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the gentleman from Ohio for what he said. He mentioned two things that I want to elaborate on. First, about the Bush administration's inaction on the price of gasoline.

Mr. Speaker, I often find myself quoting the Vice President because he seems to be the one who speaks more often on this issue, maybe on most

issues, but certainly on this issue. Reading something from Reuters today where Vice President Mr. CHENEY said, "Record high U.S. gasoline prices cannot be blamed on the global price of crude." In an interview with Reuters, Cheney also said, "Jawboning OPEC to increase production and reduce the price of crude would have market consequences." I do not know what he means by that. He says that if the United States talked OPEC nations into increasing production, thus dropping the price of crude, the end result could be a slowing in investment by oil companies.

Mr. STRICKLAND. Mr. Speaker, the fact is that the oil companies are recording record profits. The oil companies are getting the profits which they ought to be using to invest in new technologies and in new resources. We ought not to feel sorry for the oil companies. They are doing very well. But I tell you who I feel sorry for. I have got residents in my district who drive one way 85 or 95 miles to work so that they can have a job to support their families. They do that day in and day out, and some of them year in and year out. They are going to the pumps, and they are paying \$1.86 up to \$2 per gallon to put gasoline in their tanks simply so they can go to work and earn a living. We have got a responsibility to do something about that. It just really, really troubles me.

When someone runs for the Presidency, they assume responsibility. The President has a responsibility to the American people to provide leadership and to protect them from being gouged by the oil industry. That is his responsibility. If he did not want to accept that responsibility, he ought not to have sought the Presidency. There is a burden that comes with an office. We share it here in this House, but the President and the Vice President share it as well. They have got a responsibility to step up to the plate to say what is happening is wrong and to take steps to make sure that the American people are protected.

Mr. Speaker, I do not think that we can overestimate the anger of the American people on this issue, and it is going to grow as we enter into the summer months and gasoline goes from \$1.86 to \$2 and beyond. That is when we are going to see the strong feelings of the American people directed toward us. That is one of the reasons to act. The real reason we should act is because it is the right thing to do for our constituents. But even if we did not care about the well-being of our constituents, if our only unworthy motive was our political survival, we ought to care.

Mr. Speaker, I hope the President and the Vice President and the leaders of this House are listening to this debate because the American people are expecting action.

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, I totally agree with what the gentleman said. I was looking at this last statement which I read where the Vice

President said if the U.S. talked OPEC nations into increasing production, thus dropping the price of crude, the end result could be a slowing in investment by oil companies. It is almost as if he is saying that it is a good thing that the prices are going up because that gives them more money to invest, which is incredible.

Mr. STRICKLAND. I think his actions indicate that he is happy with the high prices. To say that the answer to the high prices is just for the American citizen to get a tax break so he can then take that tax break, use it to pay these high prices so that the oil companies will get their profits, that is very troubling to me.

Mr. PALLONE. I agree. It is incredible to think about the reasoning that goes behind it.

The second thing which was mentioned is the profits that the companies are getting. There is a chart here that I have that says that while consumers face spiking energy prices, many oil, gas and power companies post record profits. For example, Exxon-Mobil reaped nearly \$18 billion in profits last year, up more than 120 percent over the previous year.

This has a chart, and I will just give a few of them. It has Exxon-Mobil profits, increased from 1999 124 percent; British Petroleum-Amoco increased 54 percent; Chevron increase in profits over the year, 151 percent; Hess, which is in New Jersey, increase of 234 percent; Texaco, an increase of 116 percent. It is just incredible to see how much money they have been making.

Mr. STRICKLAND. Their profits are enormous. The supplies are there; otherwise we would not be able to go to the pump and buy the gasoline. I know of nowhere in this country where there seems to be a shortage of gasoline at this time. There is all of the gas that we want to buy if we are willing and able to pay for it. How much profit is enough? How much profit is it going to take to encourage the oil industry to innovate and to do those things that they need to do to bring more supplies to market?

Mr. Speaker, if I felt that there was a true shortage of supply, then there may be some reasonable expectation that prices would escalate. But what we have now is apparently a sufficient supply; but ever-increasing costs and ever-increasing profits; and we have got a President and a Vice President who seems to think that is okay. That is very troubling.

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, I do not want to prolong what we say necessarily, but I want to mention again that the Democrats came out today with an energy policy and principles. Obviously, we did this a couple of days before we hear the final report that is going to come out from the Vice President which will express the President's position. I am very proud of what we did today because it basically addresses each of the issues that I think that the public is concerned about, both short term and long term.

If I can just review it and then we can finish our Special Order. First of all, it specifically deals with the problem of prices going up now, first of all, by asking that the President put pressure on OPEC to increase production and lower prices and to use the SPR, the strategic petroleum reserve, and to investigate the price gouging by the biggest companies.

□ 2000

Then it has with regard to energy efficiency, what I mentioned, these best tax credits for both consumers and businesses to improve energy efficiency, to use renewables; and then we also have emergency funding to help low- and fixed-income families meet the rising cost of home heating and cooling bills, basically supplemental to the LIHEAP program which helps people with their energy bills. We have the price caps imposed on wholesale electricity prices in the West, which I think is necessary. That is something that we are going to be addressing in our committee next week when we get the energy bill that comes up. We also have strong provisions to protect the environment. We are saying that you can increase production, but you have to do it in a way that protects the environment.

One of the things I would note is that during the 8 years of the Clinton administration, there actually was a significant increase in production; but they were not drilling in ANWR and other sensitive areas. What we are really doing, I think, is investing in the future. We are trying to come up with ways to encourage conservation, do things more efficiently, increase production but at the same time address this real problem that exists now both with the energy crisis where you have blackouts, electricity blackouts, as well as with the high price of gasoline. All those things have to be looked at as the gentleman pointed out. I want to thank him, and I want to thank the rest of my colleagues for joining me this evening.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. GRAVES). The Chair reminds all Members that remarks in debate should be addressed to the Chair and not to others outside the Chamber.

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 12 of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess subject to the call of the Chair.

Accordingly (at 8 o'clock and 1 minute p.m.), the House stood in recess subject to the call of the Chair.

□ 2340

AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker pro

tempore (Mr. SESSIONS) at 11 o'clock and 40 minutes p.m.

REPORT ON RESOLUTION PROVIDING FOR CONSIDERATION OF H.R. 1836, ECONOMIC GROWTH AND TAX RELIEF RECONCILIATION ACT OF 2001

Mr. REYNOLDS, from the Committee on Rules, submitted a privileged report (Rept. No. 107-68) on the resolution (H. Res. 142) providing for consideration of the bill (H.R. 1836) to provide for reconciliation pursuant to section 104 of the concurrent resolution on the budget for fiscal year 2002, which was referred to the House Calendar and ordered to be printed.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

By unanimous consent, leave of absence was granted to:

Mr. HALL of Ohio (at the request of Mr. GEPHARDT) for today on account of a family emergency.

Ms. SLAUGHTER (at the request of Mr. GEPHARDT) for today on account of personal business.

SPECIAL ORDERS GRANTED

By unanimous consent, permission to address the House, following the legislative program and any special orders heretofore entered, was granted to:

(The following Members (at the request of Mr. McNULTY) to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material:)

Ms. KAPTUR, for 5 minutes, today.

Ms. NORTON, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. SHOWS, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. DEFAZIO, for 5 minutes, today.

(The following Members (at the request of Mr. COX) to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material:)

Mr. ENGLISH, for 5 minutes, May 16.

Mr. SAM JOHNSON of Texas, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. BURTON of Indiana, for 5 minutes, May 16 and 17.

Mr. WELDON of Florida, for 5 minutes, May 17.

(The following Member (at his own request) to revise and extend his remarks and include extraneous material:)

Mr. LANGEVIN, for 5 minutes, today.

SENATE BILL REFERRED

A bill of the Senate of the following title was taken from the Speaker's table and, under the rule, referred as follows:

S. 166. An act to limit access to body armor by violent felons and to facilitate the donation of Federal surplus body armor to State and local law enforcement agencies; to the Committee on the Judiciary; in addition to the Committee on Government Reform for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned.