

prices of gasoline and soon will face even higher costs for natural gas. Short of moving to Florida or another warm weather State, the American people are looking to Congress to solve this problem. Recent events such as Hurricanes Katrina and Rita have highlighted a very serious problem with the Nation's crude oil and gasoline supply/demand balance. One way to fix this balance is for the United States to increase its refining and production capacity. No new refinery has been built in the United States in nearly 30 years. Total current capacity at operating refineries is 17 million barrels per day while total U.S. demand is nearly 21 million barrels per day. Therefore, the only way to bridge this gap is to increase the amount of imported refined products from foreign sources. Currently the U.S. imports 7.9 percent of its total refined petroleum products. By 2005, the U.S. is expected to import 10.7 percent of its total.

Mr. Speaker, these staggering numbers further underscore the dire need for new and increased refining capacity in the United States. If not, we will continue to rely on unstable, anti-American governments to meet our growing demand for gasoline. Not only will this situation be a blow to economic growth in this country but it will also represent a serious national security risk for all of us.

Even before Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, a number of market factors contributed to the record high gas prices: An increased demand at home and abroad, political unrest in the Middle East and in Africa and product disruptions contributed to the already tightening supply of crude oil. Until refining capacity and production capacity grow faster than demand, oil markets will remain tight and vulnerable to unforeseen and unpreventable events such as natural disasters. The high cost of gasoline and other fuels has the potential to stifle economic and job growth and is putting a strain on the wallets of American families.

Of course the most efficient way to reduce our dependence on oil and gas is to encourage conservation. Making sure your tires are inflated properly, carpooling and using public transportation are all fast and easy ways to conserve gasoline. In homes, buying energy-efficient appliances and making sure doors and windows are properly sealed are effective ways to conserve. But, Mr. Speaker, these are short-term fixes. Curbing demand is necessary, but in the long term it is not merely enough. We need to increase domestic production of oil. Currently the U.S. imports about 60 percent of all of its oil. The Department of Energy projects this number to increase to 73 percent by the year 2025. In order to ensure reliable and secure supplies of oil, we have no choice but to increase the domestic supply.

One way to increase production is to finally open ANWR to oil and gas exploration in Alaska. The United States

Geological Survey estimates that there is between 5.7 and 16 billion barrels of oil that is technically recoverable. This estimate does not take into account that with new technology, the share could become even higher. A resource of this magnitude cannot simply be ignored. ANWR alone would be capable of reversing the decline in U.S. petroleum supply within a decade. It is not a quick fix. There are no quick fixes. But it is the quickest and most reliable option we now have to reverse the decline brought upon us by years of neglect of our domestic capacity.

In addition to gasoline, oil and natural gas play a key role in the homes of all of us. Oil and natural gas help generate the electricity that powers lights, appliances and entertainment systems. They also provide the building block for plastics, resealable food storage containers, and durable appliances and electronics, all of which contribute to a convenient and safe environment for all of us.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, even under the best circumstances, storms like Hurricanes Katrina and Rita would have had a noticeable impact on oil markets. However, at a time of extremely high demand and tight supplies, practically shutting down the United States' largest oil and refining region caused even greater pressure on our oil markets. In order to alleviate this pressure, we must increase our domestic refining capacity and production. If not, gasoline and home heating prices will continue to climb.

REPUBLICAN CORRUPTION AND ITS IMPACT ON AMERICA

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 4, 2005, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PALLONE) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, at a time when working families are trying to pinch pennies to pay for skyrocketing gas, record high heating bills and ever-increasing health insurance premiums, this is not the time for Washington to ignore the real needs of the American people.

But that is exactly what has happened over the last 5 years under Republican leadership in Congress. Mr. Speaker, a culture of cronyism exists here in Washington unlike anything we have ever seen before. At the White House, we have the President's chief political adviser and the Vice President's chief of staff under investigation for illegally leaking a covert CIA operative's name to reporters. Today we learn that the Vice President himself may also be under investigation in that case. Evidently, according to today's Washington Post, the special prosecutor is assembling evidence that, and I quote, "Cheney's longstanding tensions with the CIA contributed to the unmasking of operative Valerie Plame."

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman will suspend. Members are reminded to avoid remarks personally offensive to the Vice President.

Mr. PALLONE. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Despite the fact that President Bush promised 2 years ago to fire anyone that was involved in the leak, both Karl Rove and Scooter Libby remain on the White House payroll.

And it is just not over at the White House. Here on Capitol Hill, you have the Republican Senate leader under investigation by the SEC for possibly having inside information on stocks that he sold off earlier this year. Over on this side of the Capitol, the Republican majority leader was forced to step down from his leadership post—

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman will suspend. Members are reminded that they are to avoid personalities toward Senators, as well.

Mr. PALLONE. Okay, Mr. Speaker.

Shortly after the majority leader stepped down, Time Magazine's Jonathan Alter wrote about the majority leader's tenure as majority leader and how the Republican majority leads this House. Alter recalls his first visit with DELAY a decade ago. These are Alter's own words, and I quote: "A decade ago, I paid a call on Tom DeLay in his ornate office in the Capitol. I had heard a rumor about him that I figured could not possibly be true. The rumor was that after the GOP took control of the House that year, DeLay had begun keeping a little black book with the names of Washington lobbyists who wanted to come see him. If the lobbyists were not Republicans and contributors to his power base, they—"

PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY

Mr. STEARNS. Mr. Speaker, a point of order.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman will state his point of order.

Mr. STEARNS. Can a Member of Congress intimate as the gentleman from New Jersey is doing about Mr. DELAY in reference to a black book and all the innuendo that he is doing on the House floor? Can he do that?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is the gentleman stating an inquiry or making a point of order?

Mr. STEARNS. I am stating an inquiry.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from New Jersey has not yielded for purposes of a parliamentary inquiry.

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, I am just reading from Time Magazine, so I do not see why I cannot continue.

As I said, the gentleman from Texas may no longer be the majority leader, but he is still wielding power here in this Chamber and that power is not benefiting the American people. Instead, the actions of the House Republican majority benefit only a small few to the actual detriment of everyday Americans.

Mr. Speaker, it is no wonder that this House only brings legislation to the floor that benefits the wealthiest few in our Nation, because these are the people who are in TOM DELAY's black book. The House Republican leadership has heard that the American people are struggling to afford skyrocketing gas prices, so what do they do? House Republicans pass an energy law this summer that even the Bush administration admits will do nothing to lower gas prices for the American consumer. Instead, the energy law provided billions of dollars in tax breaks for oil and gas companies, and these are companies that are already experiencing record profits.

What about the American people? Well, as Alter explains in the Time Magazine article, they are not in the Republican leadership's black book and so their concerns really don't matter to the Republican leadership.

Mr. Speaker, whether you are in New Jersey or wherever you happen to be, the American people do not like what is happening here in Washington. They see examples of cronyism in every Republican corridor and they want it to stop. The American people want us to get back to addressing their needs and their concerns. It is time for the House Republican leaders to throw away their special interest black books like the one that TOM DELAY has so they can finally listen to the real needs and concerns of ordinary Americans.

IRAQI ELECTIONS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 4, 2005, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. GOHMERT) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. GOHMERT. Saturday was a great day in American history. It was a great day in international history. And for those of us that do not read Time Magazine, it was a great day for democracy.

The Iraqi elections came off Saturday. The results are still coming in. We do not know all that occurred. But there are great things that already can be gleaned from what happened. The Iraqis showed an extraordinary amount of courage. Whereas in America on election day we have people who say, I don't know if I can brave going down and standing in line for 5 or 10 minutes. That may be more than I can handle.

Or, gee, the traffic is kind of heavy today. I don't know if I am going to go vote. I don't know, it looks like it might rain. I may catch the next election.

Not in Iraq. The Iraqis had the opportunity to vote on a constitution. They had an opportunity to vote for governing themselves for the first time in the history of mankind in what many acknowledge to be the cradle of humanity, where mankind began, and they came out and voted.

When I was in Iraq earlier this year, it was after the January elections, and

they talked in terms of 8 by 11 flyers that were posted all over the countryside, around the voting areas, that simply said, If You Vote, You Die. Those people that voted knew they were going to have to dip their fingers into permanent blue ink that would be on their fingers for probably a couple or 3 weeks. They knew they could be targets by what they had marked on their fingers. Yet they had the courage to step forward.

Some of the things people do not hear and do not read because not all magazines give you all the facts, but there were many places where Iraqi policemen stepped up to protect the voters. These were not American soldiers. These were not American police. They were Iraqis protecting Iraqis who had developed national pride in what they were trying to accomplish. I did not hear it on any of the media, I certainly did not read it in Time Magazine, but there were a couple of policemen who gave their lives in stepping forward and trying to protect voters. I was told by the Iraqis when I was over there, the voters never got out of line because they realized if they got out of line from voting and ran for cover, those guys that died protecting them while they tried to vote would have died for nothing, much like if we cut and ran from Iraq before this process is finished, then those valiant, brave people whose names we have just heard more of would have died for nothing. Thank God we have a President who is seeing this through to the end.

There was an additional policeman, I was told by Iraqis, who found a suicide bomber in the voting place. He grabbed him, rushed him outside, threw him to the ground, threw himself on top of him and they were both killed in the ensuing explosion. Nobody got out of line, they told me, because they knew that would have meant that the policeman died for nothing. They stayed, they voted, and thank God they have some great days ahead. It is not easy days. It is difficult days. We have got to stay the course.

Some of the headlines I did read, not in magazines necessarily but some of the periodicals said it turned out to be the most peaceful day in months, this preceding Saturday when it was voting day. Only one of Baghdad's 1,200 polling stations came under attack, another article read. The relatively small number of insurgent attacks compared with the last poll may be a sign of how Sunni involvement in politics can complicate matters for insurgent leaders whose aim is to destroy the political process.

Just as evil unimpeded and unobstructed by good people will spread in an insidious way, so will good and democracy spread just like sunlight during the dawn of a new day as it touches more and more land and spreads. That process is in its infancy in the Middle East, but it is a beautiful thing to see occurring and we can thank God and thank those people who have served their country and given their lives.

Here are other comments. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said the Sunnis are now invested in this process. There is no political base any longer for this insurgency.

I was told by a former general under Saddam Hussein this past spring in Iraq that if you will just stand behind us in America until we get our constitution voted in, until we have an election under the constitution, you will see violence subside.

We are very grateful for all those who have contributed.

THE GROWING NATIONAL DEBT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 4, 2005, the gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. COOPER) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. COOPER. Mr. Speaker, any day now, the United States of America will have borrowed over \$8 trillion. That is not an occasion to celebrate. That is an occasion to be very worried about the future of our country. \$8 trillion is a fantastic sum of money. To see how long it is, all those numbers stretched out, just look outside the office of any Blue Dog Member of this Congress and you will see a chart like this, because it will show you that as of today, the debt is \$7.989 trillion. That means we are only \$11 billion away from passing the \$8 trillion threshold.

How quickly are we approaching that threshold? We are borrowing almost \$1 billion a day. That means within the next week or two, we will pass the \$8 trillion threshold. Of course, much of the money we are borrowing, we are borrowing from foreigners, and increasingly from the Chinese. So all Americans need to be on alert, because this is something that has never happened before in all of American history. We have had ups and downs, we have had the Depression, we have had the Civil War, but we have never been borrowing money at this rate.

Let me put it in historical perspective. It took the first 204 years of our Nation's history to accumulate \$1 trillion in debt. And now we are doing that every 2 or 3 years. Our Nation's top accountant, David Walker, of the GAO has said that arguably the year 2004 was the worst year in America's entire fiscal history. Why would our top accountant say something like that? First of all, because he believes it is true, and it is also because this Congress promised \$13 trillion worth of new spending in one year, none of which is paid for. Imagine promising \$13 trillion and not even beginning to pay for it.

Later this week under a newly resolved Republican majority, they are planning on increasing the amount of reconciliation that we will undertake by some \$15 billion. That sounds mighty good on the surface, but that is about 2 weeks' worth of this borrowing. I do not think 2 weeks' worth is going