

I think I will be here a week from today, and what I want to do at that time is spend most of the time talking about realistic expectations from all of these alternative sources of liquid fuels.

30-SOMETHING WORKING GROUP

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 18, 2007, the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. RYAN) is recognized for 60 minutes.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to once again start our 30-Something hour. We will be joined later by Congressman MEEK from Florida to talk about the issues of the day and how what has been happening here in Congress affects what is going on to young people, but not limited to just young people in the 30-something bracket, but also to young people in college, young people in their 20s, young people trying to figure out how they are going to make their way in the American economy in the 21st century.

As we know, Mr. Speaker, we have been given many challenges over the past few years here in Congress dealing with many of the issues that face Americans.

Since Speaker PELOSI took over a short time ago, we have been committed, since this Congress was taken over by the Democratic Party, we have been committed to push initiatives that are consistent with the values that we hold dear in the United States of America. We hear a lot of rhetoric about values in this country, but if the policy initiatives that come out of this beautiful building in Washington, DC do not reflect our values, then we are in the wrong business.

And I am proud to say that since we have taken over here, we have shifted course from policies that many Americans believe have taken us in the wrong direction. And many of us still believe, even those of us here think we have made a shift in policy, but it has been difficult with the President to try to get a complete pivot out of the months and months and months and years and years and years of bad policy.

So I think it is important before we talk a little bit about what we have done is to go back and think about what we are trying to come out of, some of the challenges that this country faces. I think it is important to recognize politically that from 2000 until 2006, the Republican Party controlled the House, controlled the Senate, and controlled the White House. They had an opportunity to implement their policy—the neoconservative foreign policy, the conservative domestic policy, the conservative energy policy, the conservative higher-ed policy in America, the conservative “compassionate conservative” agenda on poverty and inequality—has all been implemented.

So when we talk about what will it look like if the conservative agenda is implemented, I think that is a false analysis of what will it look like. I think we know. I think what we are living with here today is the implementation of the conservative Republican agenda. They controlled the House, they controlled the Senate and the White House. The Bush tax policy, the Bush energy policy, all of these things that I have already mentioned have been implemented.

And if you want to know what it looks like, all you really need to do is go to the gas tank. You need to get your health care bill and see what your premium and the costs look like. You need to pull out the stub of your child's tuition. All of these things are the end result of the Republican domestic agenda being implemented here in the United States of America. You may not like it. I know a lot of Republicans, Mr. Speaker, who don't like it, but that is where we are.

And if you look at the financial situation that this country has been put in, the straightjacket that we have been put in that a lot of the changes that the Democratic Congress wants to make that we are at this point unable to make because of the financial position that we have been put in as a country and as a Nation, the fact of the matter is this: President Bush, Mr. Speaker, and the Republican Congresses that were under his watch borrowed more money from foreign interests than every President and Congress before President Bush combined.

Now think about that. In just those few years, President Bush and the Republican Congress borrowed more money from foreign interests than every President and Congress before them combined. The Republican-controlled Congress and President Bush raised the debt limit five times and borrowed \$3 trillion primarily from Japan, China, and OPEC countries.

Now you want to talk about a scam going on and a shell game, we have a situation where we are borrowing money from oil-producing countries to basically give us money to go out and buy their oil, or to borrow money from oil-producing countries and from China so we can fund a war at \$12 billion a month and put it on the credit card. Now that seems to me the definition of insanity, Mr. Speaker. Three trillion dollars, and this is as simple as your house payment or your car payment. You borrow money and you have to pay interest on it.

So countries like China will get the interest that the United States is paying on the money that we have borrowed, and the Chinese will take that money and they will sink it into developing and industrializing their own economy. And they are putting up nuclear plants so they have nuclear energy. And they are building roads, bridges and industrial parks. And they are funding their military and their navy. That is what they are doing with

money that the United States is borrowing from them. And we take the money and we get ourselves into this war in Iraq at \$12 billion a month, that is soon approaching a trillion dollars for the cost of the war, and some economists are saying at the end of the war, the grand total will be \$3 trillion.

Now from Youngstown, Ohio, and Niles, Ohio, and Akron, Ohio, the folks that I represent are not really comfortable with the United States taking their tax dollars and paying interest on money they are borrowing from the Chinese so that the Chinese can build manufacturing facilities and manipulate their currency and ship the products back to the United States and put American workers out of work.

□ 1800

Now, there's something ironic about what's happening there. And there's really something sick, Mr. Speaker, about what's happening here. And when you look at the polls and you hear people say that 70 percent of Americans think that we're going in the wrong direction, the President has an approval rating of 28 percent, and the other 72 percent do not approve of the job that he is doing, you have to ask yourself, what is wrong? What is wrong? What is going on to have this dramatic breach in the American body politic?

And so, when Speaker PELOSI, and when we ran our elections in 2006 to come and take over Congress in 2007, it became imperative for us to try to pivot and shift this thing in another direction. So one of the issues is make sure that we pay for programs that we have here in the United States. No deficit spending.

Now, we've had problems, especially with the war, because we're committed over there. And it's been very difficult. We've tried to get out.

The President has vetoed every attempt we've ever tried to make. But we're trying to establish public policy in the United States of America that represent our values.

And if you look at what we have pushed coming out of this body, I think most Americans would agree, these are some pretty basic steps that we want to take. First thing we did when we got in is raise the minimum wage. For the first time since 1997, the American worker got a pay raise. It wasn't much. It should be a lot more. But we did what we could. And we said, this is a priority for us. 10 years without an increase in the minimum wage, but health care and energy and all of these other costs are going up for folks. Let's try to lift some people up, reward work. And we did that.

We have switched and tried to repeal the oil subsidies, corporate welfare, many of us know it as corporate welfare. Everyone hates welfare if we're giving it to poor people. They should go to work. They should work. This is America. We should not give welfare. That's the rhetoric that you hear.

But behind the scenes, our friends on the other side and President Bush are

very happy to give the oil companies 14 or \$15 billion in oil subsidies, in energy subsidies.

Now, can you imagine, and today when you go to the gas pump and you pay \$3.50, \$3.75, \$4 for a gallon of gas. You think you're frosted just filling up the tank. Think about the fact that President Bush said that he will veto any bill that comes out of this House that repeals the \$15 billion that's going in corporate welfare to the oil companies.

Now, can you imagine, in this day and age, where Exxon's profits are through the roof, that the President of the United States says he will veto a bill that strips the corporate welfare out?

They're making tremendous profits. And what we have tried to do on the Democratic side, and Speaker PELOSI has tried to do, is to take that 14 or \$15 billion away from the oil companies, away from the energy companies, and invest that money into alternative energy research; into wind, into biomass, into solar.

Now, we all know that these alternative energy forms, there's not one silver bullet. There's not one project or product that's going to come out and save us all and be a panacea for the entire United States of America and the world. We know that.

But Americans invent things. Americans make things better. Americans take a challenge and a problem and they fix it, and they solve it. They put the best and the brightest people that we have in this country, and they set a goal.

I'm not going to go do the research. President Bush certainly isn't going to go do the research. We've got a couple of rocket scientists that belong in this body that have been elected by their constituents here that may be able to actually do some of the research. But, for the most part, our job here is to set the public policy and provide the resources and the leadership for the country. And that's what we're trying to do is to say, invest into the Department of Energy, partner with energy companies.

We know you're not going to get rid of oil overnight. Many of us believe nuclear has a major role in what's going to happen here. But the bottom line is, let's make an investment into the United States, into the people, into the human resources that we have here to figure out what we're going to do, and then get the private sector and private enterprise to partner with us to get this thing kicked off.

It is crucial for us to reduce our dependency on foreign oil, crucial because we can extract ourselves from a lot of these political situations that we find ourselves in. In a lot of the global politics that we see and read, if you read between the lines and you think for yourself, you will see that there is some kind of energy component behind this, behind the politics that are going on, the geopolitics that are going on.

And if we can become dependent on the Midwest instead of the Mideast, I think this country will remove itself from a lot of the problems that we have had, and we could help move this country forward. And that's what we are committed to doing here in the United States.

And just today, or yesterday, out of the Education Committee, GEORGE MILLER, who's the Chair of the committee, they passed an authorization, I think, of \$6 billion, if I remember correctly, to help schools, new schools. There'll be a formula to make sure that the school is green. So now, you're providing some leadership for the companies that will provide the products for a school or a building to become green. There'll be a little bit of a stimulation.

And I want to tell one quick story that I found interesting. We have a gentleman here in Congress, his name is JIM OBERSTAR, and he's the Chair of the Transportation Committee. He's been here since the late 1970s.

And I may miss a few of the facts here, but the point can be made that in the late 1970s, when he was a Member of Congress, and President Carter was in, he was trying to—the solar panel, there was some money put into the Department of Energy to research and develop alternative energy sources. And something popped out of that, it was called the solar panel.

And Mr. OBERSTAR had a piece of legislation that said we need to retrofit all Federal office buildings in the United States with solar panels. And by the Federal Government coming in and buying the solar panels, it will stimulate the solar panel market because the Federal Government is such a big consumer, and just like buying pens and everything else, and it will drive the cost down of the solar panels. So that was in 1977, 1978.

In 1980, when President Reagan came in, he completely eliminated that part of the Department of Energy that was providing that research and, basically, nothing happened. And he has now went from a rank and file member; Mr. OBERSTAR is now the Chair of the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee. So he now has this bill that he reintroduced, told his staff to go back and get his notes from 30 years ago about what he wanted to do with solar panels.

Now, can you imagine how far behind the 8-ball we are? When you look at production of solar panels, it used to be an industry that the United States excelled in and that we had a great share of the solar panel market in the early 1990s. But now, we have been surpassed because we have not made the investments.

And I'm not here, Mr. Speaker, Mr. MEEK, to say that government somehow has all the answers. But we do have a role to play in stimulating the economy, Mr. MEEK. And when we do that, we will allow the private sector to come in.

So we need to do what we need to do with alternative energy research. We need to do what we need to do with high speed rail. We need to do what we need to do with broadband access. These are the things that government has a role in, infrastructure, education, health care. These are the things that we need to invest in. And that's what we've been trying to do in the area of health care.

One of the things that, I mean, you can't really find a better example or illustration of a difference in values from Speaker PELOSI and President Bush on this one issue. It's the issue of state, the State Children's Health Insurance Program. When we came in, one of Speaker PELOSI's priorities was to provide leadership and resources for the State Children's Health Insurance Program.

This is a program that would provide health care, Mr. MEEK, for 10 million children of modest income, didn't quite qualify for Medicaid, middle class kids, middle class families struggling to provide health care. This was to fill that gap. Bipartisan support here in the House, and in the Senate, tremendous support.

So it passed the House, passed the Senate, President Bush vetoed it. Now, can you imagine where your priorities are when you're willing to spend \$12 billion a month in Iraq, and you won't sign a children's health care bill to provide health care for middle class citizens at \$35 billion over 5 years?

But you'll spend 12 billion a month in Iraq and not even ask a question as to where the money's going. There's billions of dollars that are lost in Iraq, nobody knows where they are, Mr. Speaker. Nobody knows where that money is.

And we struggle to find \$35 billion to provide health care for modest income families. That investment that, at the end of the day, will probably save us billions of dollars because these kids won't go right to the emergency room. They'll have some preventative care. That will save us money in the long run. And the President vetoed it. And he vetoed it.

And in the Senate, 80 Senators overrode the veto. But in the House, we could not override the veto because a handful of Republicans on the other side were committed to support the President in his position.

Now, can you imagine that? In the wealthiest country in the world, the dominant super power, we can't scrape up \$35 billion over 5 years to provide health care for middle class kids?

And the President thinks he's taken a stand on this issue and saying he's fiscally responsible, after running up \$3 trillion in debt, borrowing it from Japan and China and OPEC countries?

When you're deciding on where your philosophies are, what your values are, this is the issue. This is the defining issue. Health care for kids, \$12 billion a month in Iraq. Tax cuts for people who make billions of dollars a year, health care for kids?

This is clear. And our job, as representatives of the people, Mr. MEEK, and I'll kick it to you here in a second, is to make sure that we bring some equity into this system.

And I will say this. The investments that we have made, or tried to make on SCHIP, the minimum wage, alternative energy, the fact that we did pass, and the President did sign a \$1,000 increase in Pell Grants over 5 years, for students, and we cut the student loan interest rate in half, from 6.8 percent to 3.4 percent. So if you are going out trying to borrow for your kids, your interest rate is cut in half.

Those are the priorities that we push every day here on this House floor. Those are the priorities that are going to lead to an expansion of our economy.

We only have 300 million people in this country, Mr. MEEK. There's 1.2 or 1.3 billion in China, 1.2 or 1.3 billion in India. We only have 300 million. And the philosophy of our party is to make sure that we invest into those 300 million people, to make sure they're educated and they're healthy. And I feel like if we make sure our kids are educated and healthy, that most everything else will take care of itself.

□ 1815

That's where we are. That's the agenda we're pushing.

Mr. MEEK, I appreciate the fact that you're taking time away from your busy schedule and family to come down here, and I would like to yield to my very good friend from Florida.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Well, Mr. RYAN, I want to thank you for sharing not only thoughts about the Members, but also reminding them of the work that has been done and work that needs to be done here on this house floor.

I can tell you, Mr. RYAN, that it's very frustrating at times to hear and see some of the finger pointing that goes on not only here under the Capitol dome, but here in Washington, D.C. The work that this 110th Congress has done overshadows the work of the 109th Congress as it relates to accomplishing things on behalf of the American people. And I am very concerned about the fact that Members seem to get a little amnesia on how we got to where we are now.

Last week, I had a chart on the floor here. I don't know what happened to it. I'm not accusing anybody of anything. But I was driving the point home of the colleagues on the other side about gas prices and writing the Speaker a letter saying, What are you going to do? You promised a year ago that you would do something about it. What are you going to do? What are the Democrats going to do? The Republican leadership wrote, We stand firm to be with you as it relates to doing something about energy prices or gas prices.

And it's interesting because these are the individuals who, especially on the Republican side, were a part of supporting and standing up the 2001 plan

and the meeting that took place in the White House with Mr. CHENEY and a number of energy companies, which I think was one of the most profitable meetings for the oil industry because they have just hand-over-fist made money since that meeting. And even today I think it was projected or it was announced that it's another record-breaking quarter for oil companies while Americans pay through the nose and small businesses pay through the nose for fuel.

I couldn't help but be on I-75 in Florida on my way back to Miami from St. Petersburg about 3 weeks ago and stopped at a Pilot gas station. And I was driving my uncle's truck, and the guy asked for my ID and credit card and all of those things. And I said, Goodness. I had to give my ID. I was paying with cash. I said, This is interesting. I am paying with cash and I have to show you my ID.

He said, Well, sir, we have had an uptick in truckers in filling up and pulling out without paying. I said, Wow. That's interesting. I mean with all of the tags and identifying markers identifying the company or the private-owned companies. And he said, I can tell you something—of course, he saw me and didn't think that I was anything like a congressman or anything—but he said, Times are hard out there. I mean, these guys, they can't afford to fill up their truck and make a profit and be able to support their family. Not justifying it, but he said, The higher gas goes, the more protection that soon we're going to have to have someone out there getting tags or doing some sort of check to make sure that they actually put in the amount that they paid for.

Saying all of that, that's the reason why, during the self-service days: Pay first, then pump.

I'm saying all of that to make the point that times are hard out there. We know. Bread is \$3 a loaf. We know this. The fact that rice, even if you go to Costco now you can't buy a 50-pound bag of rice. I mean, it's like being rationed, in a way. And just the price of food all over the world has really exploded.

Saying all of that, Mr. RYAN, I think that when we start looking at our work here in Congress, now more than ever, Members, we have to hold first the American people and their will, we have to hold that as our number one priority.

Now, let me just mention just a few things, Mr. RYAN, because I'm not going to try to get excited on this issue today because if I do, I may miss something. And I don't want to miss anything because the points have to be made.

And I think it's important, Mr. RYAN, as we look at this, and Members, Mr. Speaker, that when we look at the work that has been done in this Congress this week, sending four key bills to the President for his signature, and we really don't have a lot of time to

wait and see if he's going to do something because when you look at it, you have to look at the highway bill, the bill that allows competition for important highway and transit projects outlined in the 2005 highway bill which will help promote 40,000 new good-paying American jobs in transportation and construction. I think it's important that people understand that this bill will help stimulate the economy versus slow it down. It's important that the President signs this.

When you look at the other pieces of legislation that have passed, these are bills that are key bills, ensuring continuing access to student loans, the Student Loan Act. This is a critical bill that provides students and families with continued uninterrupted access to Federal guaranteed student loans. We're talking about not only this generation but the next generation and working families being able to afford higher education.

Traumatic Brain Injury Act of 2008. It comes down to many of our men and women that are in uniform over in Iraq and Afghanistan with explosions that take place and the fact that many of them are affected by the blasts that take place with these IEDs. They will join some 5.3 million Americans that are affected here at home by the same thing. And the Congress has passed this to provide the kind of funding that's needed so they can get the treatment that they deserve. We look forward to the President signing it.

But as we look at issues such as energy and fuel, I think it's important that we talk about some of the things, Mr. RYAN and Mr. Speaker, and I know you mentioned something about this whole gas thing because this is hitting home for many of us.

The Speaker, last week, called on the President to suspend the purchase of oil for the Strategic Petroleum Reserve temporarily. When you look at this issue, you have to look at it from the standpoint of bringing gas down. What the Speaker has asked for would actually bring the gas prices down to 5 to 24 cents a gallon. This is a critical first step, Mr. Speaker, towards bringing gas prices down so the American people can hopefully afford to put gas in their tanks and small businesses.

I met with some independent franchise owners of KFC and Taco Bell establishments, and they were talking about the cost of food and ingredients. One gentleman told us about the fact that his sales are down because American people cannot afford to go into, what you may call these restaurants where you can get a meal under \$10, they can't afford to do it as often as they have done it before. Hopefully, the checks and the stimulus package will be able to assist. Not only we're not talking about going out and buying a meal but to be able to provide for their families will help stimulate this economy to help drive down the cost of food and the costs that many small businesses need to survive.

Now, I think it's also important, Members, that we look at it from another standpoint, a standpoint of what farmers are having to look at.

We had a hearing here on Capitol Hill today that talked about food versus fuel, and the price of food costs, how are we going to bring a balance between biofuels and how we're going to feed the American people in the world through our crops that are here. And that's going to be an interesting discussion, especially as we start looking at shifting from the Middle East and investing in Middle Eastern countries as it relates to energy versus the midwest. And we talked about that, Mr. RYAN and I talked about that a lot the previous two Congresses.

But when we started looking at legislation and ideas that will give American people relief now, I think it's important that we look at the letter that the Speaker sent regarding the Strategic Oil Reserve that will bring the price of gas down 5 to 24 cents.

I think it's also important to look at measures that we have passed here in Congress and that many of our friends on the other side of the aisle seem to be standing up in the middle, which we call the "policy door," not allowing us to be able to send good pieces of legislation to the President without the President knowing that he has enough Republicans on this floor to withstand an override.

Now, there were four bills, and I'm going to turn it back over to you, Mr. RYAN, which was an OPEC bill that we passed that was dealing with—well, a NOPEC bill was dealing with not allowing OPEC oil companies to be able to price gouge Americans, and it allowed the Justice Department to carry out even more enforcement efforts against these, what we call, cartels.

Price gouging, also renewable energy and the Energy Security Act, a number of our Republican colleagues on the other side, as you can see this piece of paper here, voted "no." And I think it's important, especially amongst the leadership, it's important that we no longer have that kind of activity going on when the American people are looking for some relief and looking for some enforcement.

Something is not right. Something is not clean in the milk. Something doesn't smell right when it comes down to why gas continues to go up and up and up.

And it's amazing. There's an uproar about gas, and then it will go down for a minute, then it will be back up some 20 to 15 cents a gallon on top of what it used to cost.

So I think, Mr. Speaker and Members, we need to pay very close attention to what is happening on this energy issue but also pay attention to what is getting done. And we're doing a lot here. We've seen a lot.

We've sent a lot of good legislation to the President. We hope the President will sign the legislation versus vetoing to make a point that is pointless when

it comes down to the forward progress of the American people.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. When you look at what the Speaker has been asking the President to do now for weeks, possibly months, to suspend filling the Strategic Petroleum Reserve, we have this reserve in the United States that a certain amount of barrels of oil go in a day. And this is to make sure that in case of a crisis, we have oil for national defense purposes and so forth. This is oil that's going in every day.

The Speaker, based on the history and what the experts and the economists are telling us, is that if you divert that oil that's going in to the petroleum reserve and you allow that oil to be purchased on the market, that it will drive down the cost of oil.

□ 1830

And this will lead to a savings at the pump of about 25 cents per gallon because there will be an increase in the supply of oil in the market and it will drive the cost down.

Now, we're not sitting here saying that this is the magic wand we're going to waive and everything's going to be fine. But what we are saying is, when you implement this and you take some of the pressure off, you can save almost \$6 a barrel and 25 cents at the pump. So if you are a truck driver, Mr. MEEK, 25 cents, when you're putting 20 or 30 gallons in, adds up when you're spending your life driving. And throwing the kids in the back of the mini van or filling up the truck and going back and forth, this is a significant savings. And the Speaker has been pressing the President to make this move and put this oil back into the market, Mr. MEEK, but hasn't had any success at all.

I yield to my friend.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Mr. RYAN, I agree with everything you just said, outside of throwing the kids in the back of the mini van; us parents, we don't do that.

But let me just say real quickly that we look at common sense and we look at the needs of the American people. They want to know what's happening. Every time they look at that gas price board that's in front of the gas station they're thinking about, who's running the government? They're thinking about, who's overseeing this? Who's in a magic room somewhere pushing up these gas prices? And I think it's important that we understand that it's bigger than a debate, that this is really dealing with folks having to park their car. This is dealing with folks who are going through some real hard times. And we have to make sure that we stand up for them.

Now, the President may wait a little while and say, well, I'm not going to do what the Speaker asked to do, suspending filling the Strategic Reserve, I'm not going to do it. Maybe he may do it now, I don't know. The first quarter report has come out on the oil revenues. Maybe that may happen, I don't

know. I'm not saying that that's the motivation, I'm just saying that the American people need some relief and they need it now. And hopefully they will be able to get it sooner than later because we're having folks, from rising food costs, rising energy costs, finding themselves in a situation where they can't even afford to drive to work or to get their children to school.

Also, Mr. RYAN, as I spoke before about our friends on the other side of the aisle, our Republican leadership, we definitely want them to work with us as it relates to driving these energy costs down and then going after the individuals that may have something to do with jacking up the price on the American people. Last week, I talked about the fact that a gallon of gas in Iraq costs, I believe it was between \$1.30 and \$1.55. Here in the United States, it costs a lot more. And we all know what those costs are, people are reminded every day when they have to go to the pump. I have constituents that are putting something on it every day. When I say "putting something on it," they can't afford to fill their whole tank up. They're putting in \$5, \$6, whatever the case may be, and just getting less than a gallon and a half of gas because that's all they can afford. And especially for those individuals that have stepped over their budget, taking the credit card out, filling it up with a credit card. That soon adds up because it's not within their budget to pay the \$24 or the \$50 they have to pay on these credit cards.

But I go back to say that fuel in Iraq is a lot cheaper than it is here in the United States. And the U.S. military is spending in the neighborhood of \$3 and change in filling a gallon of gas in the same country. So when we start looking out how we're helping Iraq and how Iraq is assisting and appreciating our help, we also have to look at the difference and the disparity in the cost of gas between what our troops and civilian personnel have to pay for a gallon of gas there and what everyday Iraqis pay.

So when we look at it from the big picture, Mr. RYAN, we have to look at it from the executive branch level. And I think it's important that the President looks at all of this and takes it all into consideration. But we do need some action.

We talk about a commonsense approach—I said it earlier, I'll say it again—on the No Oil Producing and Exploiting Cartels Act, I think it's important that we see the passage of H.R. 2264 that has passed this House. And the Republican leadership has voted against. When you look at the Energy Price Gouging Act, you have to look at it for what it's worth. And this legislation will reduce the burden of rising gas prices on American families by providing immediate relief to consumers by giving the Federal Trade Commission authority to investigate and punish those who artificially inflate gas prices. I mean, I want that, I want it

bad to be honest with you, because I think it's important that if we have these commissions and we have those enforcement agencies, give them what they need.

Right now, as far as I'm concerned, the Federal Trade Commission is like a police officer in a high-crime area without a weapon. And I can tell you, there will be no real enforcement there if they don't have the tools that they need to be able to enforce the law when it comes down to it.

Renewable Energy and Energy Conservation Act of 2008, H.R. 5351, very important piece of legislation. The bill has ended unnecessary subsidies to oil companies in which we're investing in clean and renewable energy. And I think it's important that Americans understand, and also, Mr. RYAN, that every Member of Congress understand, that none of the legislation that I've mentioned thus far would have seen the light of day if it wasn't for the 110th Congress and it wasn't for Democrats allowing it to come to the floor.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Absolutely. And I think you've made some great points, Mr. MEEK.

I just would like to say that, if you listen to some of our friends on the other side talk about gas prices, here is a party, Mr. Speaker, and an administration for 6 years—and the President and the Vice President being oil men—not doing a thing on energy, dependence on foreign oil, so on and so forth, to somehow accuse the Democrats of not addressing the issue, and completely oblivious to the fact that we're the ones passing legislation to crack down on price gouging, Mr. MEEK. We're the ones that are passing legislation to hold OPEC accountable for price fixing. It's the Democratic Party that's repealing the subsidies to Big Oil so that we can take that money and invest it into alternative energy sources. It's Speaker PELOSI that's calling on the President to take the barrels of oil that are going into the Strategic Petroleum Reserve and put those in the market to drive down gas by a quarter, that's something easy we can do. But it is the President and the Republican Congress, Mr. Speaker, that have consistently vetoed these bills or put the kibosh on them in the Senate, blocking lower prices every step of the way.

And if you look at what we have done here, pushed by the Speaker, to have fuel efficiency standards being raised for cars and trucks, we will reduce oil consumption by 1.1 million barrels per day in 2020. This is forward-looking. This is something that will save consumers between \$700 and \$1,000 at the pump in 2020. Now, we know that's not addressing the issues today. We're talking about the Strategic Petroleum Reserve. We're talking about cracking down on OPEC. We're talking about cracking down on price gouging that may be going on in the United States and our local communities. These are the short-term issues. And each one has been opposed by the Republicans

and has been opposed by the President of the United States.

So when you ask the folks at home, Mr. Speaker, what the Congress has done, the answers are here. And if anybody wants to know what they are, they can go to the Speaker's Web site. Trying to stop price gouging at the pump, price manipulation from OPEC, divert the oil that's going into the Strategic Petroleum Reserve, that's what we're trying to do here. Repeal the subsidies for Big Oil and put that money and invest it in alternative research. Mr. Speaker, these are the policies of the Democratic Congress. And each one of those has been opposed by the Republican Party and opposed by the President of the United States, period, dot, Mr. MEEK; period, dot.

So let there be no mistake, when common sense tells you we have a couple of oil barons running the executive branch, Mr. Speaker, and the Democrats are trying to push these initiatives to provide some relief for the common good and the common folks that we represent and it's opposed by the Republicans and opposed by this administration, it's important for us to set this record straight, Mr. MEEK.

So as we begin to wrap up here, Mr. MEEK, I would like to yield to you.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Well, Mr. RYAN, I look forward to next week. I look forward to the hearings that will take place under the Dome. Again, democracy will reign. We will be able to continue to move in this new direction that the American people want us to move in.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. What's wrong with that?

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Nothing wrong with that at all.

And I also believe, Mr. RYAN, that through the hard work of not only the staff here that provide us with not only the information that we use to fight on behalf of the American people, but also when we go back to our districts, what we hear from our constituents, we give them voice, we are them. We are representatives of the various parts of the country that we're from, and it's important that we bring that level of frustration here.

Speaking of small business men and women, they own a pick-up truck or an SUV, we hear from them, Congressman, it cost me \$105 to fill my truck up. And they're still trying to sell their products for the same price, just a little bit more. Everything is going up, up, up, and they're getting priced out. And I think it's important, even from my neck of the woods in Florida, where you have bagel shops, some of them have gone so high up on bagels because of the cost and folks can't afford them.

So when you look at it, this is a major, major issue and every American is being touched by it, especially for those middle class families and for those individuals that are what we call our working poor. And so, Mr. RYAN, every day we come to the floor I think it's important we give light to that.

I also want to give the numbers on Iraq, as I always do. As of today, May 1, in Iraq, the total deaths are 4,064. The total number wounded in action and returned to duty, 16,567. And total number wounded in action not returning to duty is 13,344. Mr. RYAN, you know, every time I come to the floor I like to read that into the RECORD so that Members will understand our responsibility of trying to bring the super majority of our men and women home.

One last point, Mr. RYAN. I think that when we look at this issue called public service, and I'm speaking to all of the Members, we have to look at it from the standpoint that we're only here for a short period of time. Less than 11,000 Americans have actually had an opportunity to serve in this U.S. Congress. And every day Members should take the responsibility to treat it as though it is their last day to serve and not put something off for another day or another week or another month, because there are people out there that are counting on us and depending on us, as it relates to bringing about health care to their children, bringing down these fuel costs and energy costs, and also making sure that we're able to stimulate this economy in the right way.

So with that, I would yield back to Mr. RYAN.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Well, I appreciate that. And you brought up those who are serving here. And I think it's worth noting that the veterans measure, another initiative that the Democrats have tried to push for a new G.I. Bill, for free college for our vets, opposed by Defense Secretary Gates, opposed by the administration. This is an opportunity for us to thank those men and women who are serving our country to say, when you get out, you're going to have free college tuition anywhere in the country. And I think that's a small gesture.

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And once again, I think the President and our friends on the other side are out of step with what the American people think we should be doing. It's one thing to wave the flag, and it's another thing to put your money where your mouth is.

So, Mr. MEEK, I want to thank you for the opportunity to join you here on this beautiful Thursday evening in Washington, D.C., and I look forward to coming down here with you next week and continuing to make the case for the programs that Speaker PELOSI and Majority Leader HOYER and Mr. CLYBURN and RAHM EMANUEL and JOHN LARSON are pushing in our caucus. These are the issues that we care about and we're going to continue to push.

SPECIAL ORDERS GRANTED

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