

It is time that this Congress turns into a Congress of action that wants to move forward—our being less dependent on foreign oil—and quit relying on our enemies in an unstable region to produce our oil, to produce our energy.

So I want to thank the two gentlemen for joining me tonight. I hope you will go to house.gov/westmoreland and see the people that have signed up and believe in the fact that we need to increase U.S. oil production to lower the gas prices for all Americans.

And Mr. PETERSON, you can close.

Mr. PETERSON of Pennsylvania. If the Democrats win this debate and we don't produce energy—if we use these old statements of 68 million acres and 80 something percent is leased, that is not factual; 2.5 percent of the Outer Continental Shelf is leased, the good spots are not leased—then we are giving the future of this country away.

Mr. WESTMORELAND. And Madam Speaker, with that, I know you have enjoyed this, we yield back the balance of our time.

FURTHER MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE

A further message from the Senate by Ms. Curtis, one of its clerks, announced that the Senate having proceeded to reconsider the bill (H.R. 6124) "An Act to provide for the continuation of agricultural and other programs of the Department of Agriculture through fiscal year 2012, and for other purposes", returned by the President of the United States with his objections, to the House of Representatives, in which it originated, and passed by the House of Representatives on reconsideration of the same, it was that the said bill pass, two-thirds of the Senators present having voted in the affirmative.

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 as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Madam Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity. I want to immediately yield to my friend. There were a lot of facts thrown out here, and the folks who are paying attention here in the Chamber may want to hear the response.

I yield to my friend from Pennsylvania.

Mr. ALTMIRE. I appreciate it.

We are going to continue to tell the story of gas prices, what we've just heard. And to keep on the message and to pick up where it was left off with the previous speakers, we're talking about the 68 million acres, here's the key point—a couple of key points: One is, there's 4.8 million barrels of oil per day every day that would be available underneath those 68 million acres. That's the number, 4.8 million barrels per day every day. And we'll talk later

about that in comparison to ANWR and other issues, but just to keep on the message. These are not 68 million acres that the Federal Government just said we're going to give you the deserts in Arizona and we're going to give you a bunch of areas that are not productive. These are 68 million acres that are currently leased to oil and gas companies.

Now, presumably the oil and gas companies would only choose to purchase a lease if there was some possibility that there was oil and gas underneath there. And as I've said, the estimated oil and gas—or oil, at least—that's under there is 4.8 million barrels per day. But that's the key point; these aren't just 68 million randomly chosen acres, these are 68 million acres that the oil and gas companies themselves chose to enter into a lease agreement so that they can drill for oil and gas. That's the key point. And they're not doing it.

As we talked about a few nights ago, there are a variety of reasons why they're not doing it. One of the reasons is that they're stockpiling these leases to put on their balance sheet, declare them as assets and raise up their profits and help their stock price. That's part of it. Part of it is that the geological work and the surveying and the construction takes a lot of time. And that's being done on some of these acres, 68 million acres. So we're going to get there, in some cases, but we're not there yet, which gets to what we're going to talk about later.

There really is a difference of opinion among the two groups that we are hearing tonight, but there is no difference of opinion that we have to do something about gas prices. Now, we're talking about long-term solutions. I would hope there's not going to be a difference of opinion on some of the short-term solutions. We're talking about the Strategic Petroleum Reserve, 70 billion barrels per day beginning 2 weeks from today. The manipulation that takes place in the market, the commodities market by these commodities traders, we're going to deal with that issue. There are short-term solutions.

But what is in this dispute tonight and what we're debating in a friendly way is the difference of opinion that we have about what we're going to be as a country 10 years from now and 20 years from now. Are we going to remain dependent on oil? And yes, we're talking in this case about domestic oil. About 65 percent of the oil we get in this country is from overseas. We import it from countries that do not have good will towards Americans in many cases.

So what happens if we drill in ANWR and the 20 percent that remains of the oil that's known in the Outer Continental Shelf where we're not allowed to drill? Eighty percent is already in areas where we are allowed to drill, so what happens if we allow and get to peak capacity 20 years from now? We might be down to 55 percent, we might be down to 52 percent. We're still going

to have a majority of our oil that we import from other countries. We're going to feed the beast for the next 20 years and we're going to be in the same place then as we are now.

So is that where we want to be? We have a decision to make as a Nation on how to spend the next 10 to 20 years. How do we want to use all the resources of this Nation and all the brain power of this Nation? Do we want to focus it on continuing our dependence on oil, or do we want to focus it on alternative sources of energy? We're going to talk about that, but I know the gentleman wants to continue along this track, so I will yield back to him.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. And one of the issues that was brought up today by the President that we want to discuss—and I very much appreciate you making the presentation as to the other side of the debate that our friends made over the last hour. But a couple of the points that were made on the other side is that, well, if we go offshore, you go into the Outer Continental Shelf region, it's deep water, it's going to cost \$2 billion just to maybe get into the well. Well, when you look into the profits from 2007 for the oil companies, \$123 billion in profits last year. So the reason they give that they have to increase the price is because it is expensive to get into some of this deep water; no one is disputing that fact.

Mr. ALTMIRE. Can I talk about the \$2 billion figure?

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Sure.

Mr. ALTMIRE. Because I don't want you to lose the train of thought on that one.

The \$2 billion figure includes the surveying and the geological work to actually find the oil in the first place, which it's not just drilling, the \$2 billion is from start to peak production.

The point of the 68 million acres is we already know there's oil there. We already know where it is. They purchased the lease specifically because there is oil known to be in those lands, and they're making a conscious decision not to drill there. So the \$2 billion actually supports our argument. It doesn't hurt our argument, it supports it, that there is work that needs to be done in any new lands that we make available that we've already done in the current 68 million acres that are available. That's what that \$2 billion does.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Much of this money has already been spent in the surveying and the geological work. So now you have, last year, \$123 billion in profits. That's what you get the money for because you say it's expensive to get in there. So you're making all the profits and not necessarily going in to get the oil.

And then another comment earlier was made, well, it may take 7 years. Well, if you go to ANWR, you're not going to get a drop out for 10 years. And in 20 years—and I love how this ANWR has just become the silver bullet. If you go into ANWR today, or

even if you did go into ANWR in 1995, Madam Speaker, that will only save you, after 20 years of, when ANWR gets to peak production, it will save 1.8 cents per gallon of gas, period, at peak production.

ANWR is not a silver bullet. And if ANWR were the silver bullet, the gentleman from Pennsylvania and I would be standing on top of this Capitol waving the ANWR flag saying, this is all we need to do in America is to go to ANWR and pull out this oil that's there. And so I think it's misleading, Madam Speaker, for the President to come before the American people and say that this ANWR is a major component of us reducing our dependency on foreign oil.

□ 1945

Mr. ALTMIRE. It is instructive to look at the acreage of ANWR that we are talking about. We are talking about 200,000 acres of land in ANWR that they want to make available for drilling. So we would go from 68 million acres that are currently available for drilling to 68.2 acres. That is the significance of ANWR—68 million to 68.2 acres.

And the gentleman makes a good point about the political argument. Many Members of Congress are not like this, but I think it is fair to say there are a number of people that would draw the conclusion that they want to return home, and they want to give good news to their constituents about what they are doing on gas prices, and if there were a quick fix, if there were a way that we could return home to our constituents and say, we found the magic bullet, we are going to lower gas prices by 40 percent or 50 percent. I think it is pretty safe to say we could round up a majority in Congress if there were an immediate fix to this problem that we would do it. There is not an immediate fix. So what we have here is a discussion, a friendly debate, on what the future is, and again whether to stick with oil, or whether to go to alternative energy.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. And we're not getting this information, unlike has been proposed in some places that this is all coming from the Sierra Club, that all this information is coming from the League of Conservation Voters or some left-wing, liberal political group that doesn't care about energy and wants us all to move to a commune and then we'll all be fine. This is coming from the Department of Energy. These ANWR statistics are coming from the Department of Energy. And the Department of Energy is the executive branch, which is run by George W. Bush. These are the President's own people telling us from the Energy Information Administration of what exactly the numbers are. We are not making this up.

So on one side he comes out and says, "We need to drill in ANWR. That is a major component of our energy policy." And his own energy people are

saying, "In 20 years it will save you 2 cents a gallon." Now many of our colleagues here have said, "We are Americans. This is America." Well, the America that I know doesn't say, "We are going to really do it and save 2 cents a gallon in gas 20 years from now." That is not America. That is not America. America is saying, "We are going to be energy independent."

The problem with our friends and the disagreement that we have with the President and with our friends in the Republican Party is the basic idea that we can drill our way out of this problem. Because we can't. We have 1.6 percent of the known oil reserves in the world in the United States. And we consume 25 percent of daily oil consumption, my friend, and that means that no matter how much we drill, if we just keep drilling and drilling and drilling, we will still have to import oil. We will still be dependent on the Middle East. We will still be caught up in these political games that we are in right now in the Middle East. And we will still be in this tenuous web of dictatorships and who's got the oil and what are the supply lines and how do we keep it safe and how do we get to the market. We will still be involved in all of that.

But what the Democrats are trying to do is to take this money and invest it into alternative energy research and development. This should have been done years ago. And some of our friends on the other side and the President comes out today, it was like the President hasn't been around for the last 7 years. You control the House. You control the Senate. You control the White House. Republicans were controlling the whole capital in Washington, D.C. when I first got down here in 2002. The President got here 2 years before. Why aren't we drilling in ANWR? They said Clinton vetoed it in 1995. Why didn't the President pass it through? Why didn't the President move us forward with the Republican leadership in the House and the Senate with Trent Lott and Tom DeLay and all the other leaders that were down here?

That is failed leadership. We are here to clean up the mess. And now look where we are, at over \$4 per gallon for gas.

Mr. ALTMIRE. In speaking about the leadership that has been taking place over the last 8 years, we can talk about the impact that the low U.S. dollar has had on the price of oil per barrel which is a direct result of the economic policies of this administration and the three previous Congresses. Perhaps we will get to that later in the evening.

But as we talk about what the President said today, I think it is a little disingenuous, to be honest, to say that it is Congress' responsibility to open up, after 28 years of the moratorium, to open up the Outer Continental Shelf when there are two things at work here. There is the moratorium, and there is the executive order that was

put in place by President Bush's father, the first President Bush. Now that moratorium has been in place since 1990. And President Bush came before the Nation today and said, "Well, I want Congress to take away the moratorium, do away with the moratorium." He could right now say, By executive order, I am going to allow the leases to be purchased, the Department of the Interior to start making available these leases in the remaining portions of the Outer Continental Shelf where there is no leasing available and has not been.

Now in the past 28 years since the congressional moratorium has been in effect, we have had three Republican Presidents, one Democratic President, and we have had long terms of Democratic Congresses and long terms of Republican Congresses. And we have had times when both the legislative and the executive branch were the same parties on both sides and times where it was mixed as it is now. There have been opportunities in the past 28 years, no shortage of which for any combination of those Congresses and administrations to say, "Let's do away with the moratorium." It has not happened.

The Republicans seem to be the ones who now are pushing this. They had 6 years where they controlled the House and the White House uninterrupted. They did nothing, as the gentleman said, to do away with that moratorium. And if the President is so unhappy with the inability of oil and gas companies to purchase leases to begin the process of surveying and then eventually drilling in the remaining portions of the Outer Continental Shelf, this is a key point, he could, today, as we speak, do away with the executive order that his father put into place by his own executive order and begin that process. Because that is the first step in the process, no matter what Congress does. We can't start drilling until all the initial leasing has been done. And that is what the executive order pertains to. So I think it is disingenuous for someone to criticize Congress for not taking action when they themselves have not.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. And if the President wanted to have short-term impact on the cost, we have got to deal with the speculation in the commodities market. Period. Now economists are saying anywhere from 10 percent to 100 percent of the increase is from this speculation, so put that all together, and it is 40 or 50 percent of the increase. But if we take care of the speculation and the President would show Presidential leadership and come to Congress and say let's do something with the commodity prices and the futures speculation and Congress passed something on this so we can have short term, I would say, "You know what—there's some leadership." Let's get that done. Let's get it through Congress. Get it through the Senate. Let's have him sign it. And let's try to reduce this cost by 40 or 50 percent. That would get us under \$100 a barrel if we

could reduce the increase that has happened because of the speculation.

But he did not do that because a lot of what comes out of the executive branch today, Madam Speaker, is political. And you go back to the war, and you remember "greeted as liberators," you remember that "we're going to use the oil for reconstruction," you remember all the promises that were made. That is what this administration has said. And then it came to the economy: "Well, you know, as long as we cut taxes for the top 1 percent of the people, the domestic economy is going to take off. It's going to be a stimulant. We're going to take off. It will be good for the middle class." That hasn't worked.

And then you look at the fiscal policy where he said, the administration said, "Trust me." And we have raised the debt limit in this country. All of us. And the Republicans were leading the House, the Senate and the White House at the time, but this is America's money. They raised the debt limit five times and borrowed \$3 trillion, \$1 trillion of it from foreign interests including OPEC and China.

The President said, "Trust me." Now he comes out today and says, "If we only drill more in the United States, then we will solve this problem." But we have got to keep drilling and drilling and drilling. And you and I are here saying, "Fine. Go ahead and drill." There are 68 million acres. There are 8,000 leases. There is 80 percent of the oil that we know that we have in the United States on those 68 million acres. Drill and go get it. But when you only have 1.6 percent of the world's oil, and you consume 25 percent, you can drill until the cows come home. We're not going to drill our way to energy independence. That is just not going to happen.

So as leaders in this Chamber and as leaders in the Congress, we have got to come up with a better solution. And that is what we have done. We took the \$14 billion that was going for subsidies to the oil companies and moved that into alternative energy research so that we truly can be energy independent.

I yield to my friend.

Mr. ALTMIRE. And the two areas that we are talking about, the two areas that are in dispute where drilling is not allowed today are the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, those 200,000 acres that we are talking about, and the 85 percent of the geographical reach of the Outer Continental Shelf on which drilling is not allowed. So we will hear people on the other side say, "Well, there's 85 percent that we are not drilling in that the moratorium exists and we are not allowed to survey and do the drilling."

Again, 80 percent of the known oil in the Outer Continental Shelf is already in areas where we are allowed to drill. So don't be swayed by the fact that people will throw out the geographical reach. It would be as if we were to say

"the entire geographical reach of the United States" when we know that there are only certain areas where there is oil. And to that point, we talked about the 200,000 acres in ANWR.

Now, as we move forward on drilling on those 68 million acres, if we get to the point where the oil and gas companies have drilled on them all, which is going to be a long time, and if they do the surveying work and they come to the conclusion that there is not going to be any oil or any gas there for them to take up from the ground, then that is fine. Then we will say, "You've done your part."

But we are certainly not excited about giving them 200,000 more acres in Alaska and further development opportunities in the Outer Continental Shelf when they have those 68 million acres still available, there is oil underneath them, and we know that they are consciously making a decision not to pursue that oil.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, I am sorry. I don't feel bad for the oil companies. They want to go drill here and we won't let them. There is a reason. Why wouldn't we want to let them go to ANWR if it were going to be this big major solution?

Here are the facts of the matter. The green are areas of land that are open for leasing for oil offshore. Open for leasing is the green. What is closed is the red. They have all of this to go ahead and drill in. Go ahead. Drill. Drill to your heart's content. It's already open, the EPA permitting, you're ready, set, go. Go and do it.

Mr. ALTMIRE. If I can clarify what this chart is, it's not quite accurate. It's even a more telling story. This chart shows where the known oil is in those 68 million acres that we are talking about. So that specific that they own the leases, they are able to drill there, and they are making a conscious decision not to do it. That is what that chart shows.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. This is not Sierra Club. This is the Minerals Management Service within the Department of the Interior. This is not us making this up. The 30 Somethings, we're big on the third-party validators.

Mr. ALTMIRE. Right. And the Department of the Interior is part of the executive branch run by President Bush.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Now here, does drilling lower gas prices? Okay. So the red here are drilling permits that have been issued from 1994. The blue are the wells that have been drilled. So you see that the permits have increased, especially in the last few years. The red are the permits. The blue are the wells that have been drilled and the wells that have not been drilled as to the permitting. So with all of this going on, the price of gas has skyrocketed, commodities issues and a lot of other things going on here. But what we are saying is, you have all of these permits to drill where the executive branch,

President Bush's executive branch, is telling us that this is where the oil is, and the oil companies have found the oil there and got the permits and did the studies as you have pointed out earlier. And they have all this room here to dig, to drill, to pull the rigs up and to do everything that they have to do. And this is where you could pull out where these leases are, 4.8 million barrels of oil a day. In ANWR, it is how many barrels of oil a day?

Mr. ALTMIRE. In 20 years it will be 800,000 barrels per day. In 10 years it will be 40,000.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. And that would save you 2 cents.

Mr. ALTMIRE. In a worldwide market of 86 million barrels a day, less than 1 percent of the worldwide market.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. It would be very little impact. I tell my constituents this all the time when we are chatting, if there is a politician that has one silver bullet, if we just do this, that all of these problems are going to go away, be very, very, very skeptical.

□ 2000

We grow up learning, if it sounds too good to be true, it probably is. The oil companies are spending a lot of money, I'm sure, through Internet traffic, through advertising and TV about how they're going green. So ExxonMobil, Mr. Speaker, has spent—the industry totally—\$52 million on advertising about how they're going green and everything else. ExxonMobil, of their \$40 billion in profits, has spent \$10 million on alternative energy research and development. That is not the direction. So, when we say that it is important for us to shoot the Moon like we did in the 1960s and get into the alternative energy, that's why. That's what we have to do.

I yield to my friend.

Mr. ALTMIRE. I had not seen that chart before, Mr. RYAN. I knew the numbers, but then you see the chart graphically where it shows a very clear trend.

What is amazing about this is that's the whole thing, and I'm going to recommend that others take a look at this chart. If there is one thing people who are viewing this tonight could look at it is the argument that we hear most often, which is simple economics: The more you drill, the more the supply, and the less it's going to cost; the numbers are going to come down.

This chart, which is using numbers from this administration, does not lie. It's exactly the opposite. Gas prices continue to skyrocket despite the fact there has been an exponential increase in the number of wells that have been drilled and in the number of permits that have been issued. This is really an amazing chart, and I hope that the gentleman will leave it up there so folks can look at it while he talks, but it completely dispels the argument on the other side that this is totally about drilling for more oil and that that's

going to guarantee that prices will come down. We are drilling for more oil. We are issuing more permits by the thousands. Gas prices continue to skyrocket and to be at an all-time high.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. So that's what we're saying, and that's what the whole new direction of Congress has been about, which is, when you're making these decisions, you have to base your public policy decisions on the facts. When the facts say this, that no matter how much you're drilling and you're not keeping up for whatever reason and you only have not even 2 percent of the total oil in the world that is in the United States, 1.6 percent, and you're consuming 25 percent, any businessperson who is sitting in our seat here, looking at these facts, would say we've got a problem. We can't keep drilling.

You know, maybe we need to drill now and do what we can in the short term, but this is no long-term solution. This is clearly a problem that we have for our country. So, nuclear, biodiesel, wind, coal to liquid, whatever the case may be, those are the directions in which we need to move.

Now, a lot of folks are talking about refining capacity, so I think it's important to realize that our refineries are currently running at 88 percent. We are not at full capacity with our refineries. Everyone keeps saying, "Build more refineries. Build more refineries." In 2005, there was a 50 percent tax credit for any company that wanted to build a new refinery, and they have not. All of the big dogs over the last 20 or 30 years have said we have no interest in building a new refinery. They're making \$130 billion in profits a year. Now, all of a sudden, we feel bad for the oil companies?

The President basically came out today and said I know we're running down a dead end, but let's run faster. Let's put the juices on. Put on your new tennis shoes. You know, put on two pairs of socks so you don't get any blisters, and keep running down the wrong road until you just smack your head right into the wall.

What we're saying is we know how that movie ends. We know. We don't have enough oil to drill our way out of this thing. That's how that ends.

So let's, please, go in another direction, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. ALTMIRE. Because that was one of the prongs of the President's plan that he put forward today, to continue on refineries, the gentleman mentioned that the CEOs of the oil companies, who annually come before Congress and tell their stories and justify their exorbitant profits—and this is not a slight on them. This is just what they say—say they are not interested in building more refineries.

The President and Members on the other side will say, well, we haven't built a new refinery in 30 years.

That's absolutely true, but what we have done a lot is expand the existing capacity of current refineries because

that's what these oil executives have said in their testimony that they're a lot more interested in doing. It's a lot more cost effective for them to expand the capacity of already existing refineries than to build new ones and to go through all that's necessary to do that. So we have increased refinery capacity in this country over the last 30 years. That has gone up—that has not decreased—while the number of refineries has gone down.

So, for the President to say, well, we've not built a new refinery in 30 years, there are a couple of things. One is we've increased capacity, but more importantly, as the gentleman has said, 88 percent of the current capacity of the refineries is being used. Why would we look at building more refineries? Why would that be such an important part of the plan if we're only using 88 percent of the current refineries' capacity? So it makes no sense for that to be the major part of your plan that you put forward.

I would suggest to anyone who is listening that, if you are expanding the capacity of refineries and you're still not operating at full capacity—you're only at 88 percent—it's probably not the best time to talk about building more refineries. It's probably not where you want to go.

So, as we continue to talk about this issue moving forward, I would suggest to the gentleman from Ohio that we talk about facts, because you hear the slogan many times: You're entitled to your own opinion. You're not entitled to your own facts.

Remember the facts: There are 68 million acres where we're currently allowed to drill where we know there's oil. The price of gas has skyrocketed despite the fact that we have exponentially increased in the last several years both the number of drilling permits that have been issued and the number of wells that have been drilled. We have greatly expanded our drilling in this country, and gas prices continue to skyrocket.

There are 200,000 acres in ANWR that we're talking about that are in dispute. If we made that available to come on line in order to drill for more oil, that would bring up the total number of acres in this country that are available for oil drilling from 68 million to 68.2 million. In 10 years, we would get approximately 40,000 barrels. In 20 years, it would be 800,000 barrels, which, according to President Bush's own Department of Energy, would reduce the price of gas by less than 2 cents. So, when you add all of these factors up, I would suggest that we can't drill our way out of this problem.

I know the gentleman is going to move on to talk about the Outer Continental Shelf, and at this point, I would yield back to him.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Well, we have other illustrative charts here. This is the Outer Continental Shelf: The acres that have been leased and the acres producing. So this is in the Outer Con-

tinental Shelf already, 44 million acres, and only 10.5 million acres are being utilized. That's in the Outer Continental Shelf. It just helps. You read it, but it helps. These are statistics that are coming from the Energy Department. These aren't things that we're making up.

Mr. ALTMIRE. Before the gentleman moves on and if he could keep the acres chart up, if the other side were here, they would certainly say, well, we're talking about 44 million acres, but if you're drilling dry holes, you're not going to continue to do that; you're only going to drill where there's oil.

These are acres the oil companies and gas companies, themselves, purchased. Nobody forced them into it. Nobody twisted their arms. They sought these acres because they knew there was oil and gas underneath them. They're not randomly chosen. There are 44 million acres where we know there's oil and gas. That's why the oil and gas companies made a conscious decision to purchase the leases, so that they could have them because they know there's oil and gas underneath. These are not lands and parts of the Outer Continental Shelf where there is no oil or gas. That is simply incorrect.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. I'm sure the oil companies spent a good deal of money to identify the area. They hired a lot of geologists whom, I'm sure, they have working for them. They spent a lot of money and used a lot of technology to identify this.

But this is the area that is underdeveloped, and the President comes out and says ignore all of this, and go to ANWR or do this, which is not even being done now, and then go to ANWR. There are 4.8 million barrels of oil that would come out of this per day at maximum production and, in ANWR, 800,000. This is the Outer Continental Shelf and this is onshore. It's the same kind of situation: 47 million. Only 13.2 acres that are actually in production right now. Again, there is the number of permits.

It's interesting because we kind of went through this a few years back. You'd hear testimony from executives, and you'd hear about supply and demand. Then with the situation dealing with Enron, all of a sudden, it was not supply and demand. All of a sudden, it was all this manipulation that was going on.

Our job here is to oversee what is going on in the markets and figure out how we can make sure that everything is above board, that everything is legal.

Now, a few weeks ago on a Friday, the increase in the cost of a barrel of oil was more than a whole barrel of oil cost 10 years prior to. Something funny is going on here, and I think we need to move with the commodities issue. We've already done the Strategic Petroleum Reserve. We've already passed out of the House that which deals with the cartels. These are steps that we are taking, but if we don't move into the

alternative energy category, we're going to be sitting here 10 years from now, dealing with the same, exact issue that we're dealing with today.

Mr. ALTMIRE. Because these are 10-year solutions that we're talking about when we're talking about creating new areas where we can drill.

I think we've exhausted the topic about the number of acres that are available for current drilling. They want to increase the amount of acres.

So what, I think, is instructive to look at and what we should discuss is how we got where we are today. Some would say, well, there's no point in looking back. We have to move forward and start the process from where we are right now because we can't do anything about the decisions that were made in the past. Certainly, that is true. There are a number of factors that affect the price of gas that have led to the skyrocketing prices that families all across this country are forced to pay. We can do nothing about the increased demand in growing nations like China and India. It's a huge problem. It's going to continue, and it's going to greatly impact the price of gas moving forward. There's not much we can do about that.

The speculation in the market is something we can do something about, the manipulation that takes place in the commodities market, and this Congress is going to be bringing forth legislation to deal with that very complicated issue about how the oil commodities are traded and what the sources are of that manipulation. Congress is going to try and figure out a way that we can regulate that in an effective way.

The estimation is that that will lead to a decrease in the price per barrel of oil of up to \$30 per barrel. That's a significant chunk. It's not everything. It's going to have a real impact, though, for families all across this country.

When you hear people discuss what the options are moving forward, I think it's instructive to look at the judgment of the people who are making those arguments and what the decisions they've made in the past have led to. One of the issues that has led to the increased price of oil and price per barrel on the worldwide market is the decrease in the U.S. dollar. So what is the cause for the decrease in the U.S. dollar?

Well, two of the largest reasons are the trade deficit, that the gentleman talks about, where we've added \$1.5 trillion in foreign-held debt. This is only debt held by foreign nations. \$1.5 trillion. That's over the past 7 years. To put that in perspective, when President Bush took office in 2001, his 42 predecessors in the 220 years up to that point had accumulated a foreign-held debt in that entire time of \$1 trillion.

□ 2015

So the President has gone \$1.5 trillion in 7 years, equaled, and then by half again what his 42 predecessors did.

The \$3.5 trillion in debt that has been rolled up over the past 7½ years, \$3.5 trillion debt that this country simply cannot afford, so I think it's instructive to take a walk down memory lane for what the economy looked like, what the debt looked like when President Bush took office. The 10-year projection was for a \$5.5 trillion surplus over 10 years, \$5.5 trillion surplus. That's what we were supposed to see.

Well, it's not what we saw. We saw a \$3.5 trillion deficit over only 7½ years with more to come, unfortunately, because we can't dig ourselves out overnight from the huge hole that we've been given.

Now, what does that do to the price of the dollar? Well, we have seen what that does to the price of the dollar. It's almost at historic lows and oil is traded by the dollar in the worldwide market. That has had an enormous impact on the price of oil, and that has had an enormous impact on the price of gas at the pump.

So when you hear people give their opinion of where to go from here, what are the strategies we can use in both the short-term and the long term, I do think it's instructive to look at some of the ideas that those individuals had and those groups had in years leading up to the crisis that we now face.

The gentleman from Ohio may want to continue along these lines. I would yield back to him.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. I think it's important that we realize that this is not going to be some kind of very narrow solution to the problems that the country is in now. The point is that when President Bush came into office, there was a pretty good economic forecast, a lot of things were stable, it was time to make some key investments. That did not happen, and the situation got dramatically worse.

The middle class has continued to get squeezed, whether it was energy costs, health care costs, tuition costs, everything in the 6 years in which the President was pushing all of his agendas. I've said this more than one time on this House floor. There is no need to wonder about what the neoconservative Republican agenda would look like, because we are living in it today.

All you have to do is go to the gas pump, get your health care bill, pay your kids' college tuition, deal with the global environment, look at the foreign policy of this country, the destabilization of the Middle East, unable to deal with China. We deal with a lot of trade issues, with China, with Wheatland Tube that has a facility in my district, a facility in your district, in imports coming in from China.

It's tough for us to advocate the administration to be hard on China, to take a firm stance on China, because the administration at the same time is borrowing money from China to finance the \$12 billion a month for the war in Iraq.

So the foreign policy of the United States has destabilized the region

where a lot of the oil is, and that has not helped the situation. Our domestic problems continue to exist because we are living under the President's current economic policies. The debt burden that has been placed on our children and grandchildren over the next generation was put in place, the \$3 trillion borrowed, this is the conservative Republican agenda currently implemented.

We are trying now to take the Congress in a new direction and to move into alternative energy so we don't have this dependency which would relieve the pressure for a lot of the foreign policy issues that we are dealing with, to use PAYGO to pay for what we are spending here in Washington D.C., to try to repair this debt and eventually pare down the debt so that we can have a firm negotiating stance with China, these all fit together. We can't continue to go down this same road. At every instance, the New Direction Congress has changed course from the current administration.

But that did not stop the President from coming before the American people today and asking the American people to continue to go down a road that is a dead end, and that's drilling.

It's amazing to me, whether we are dealing with the supplemental, or dealing with the regular order of business here in Congress, when we try to push an agenda of helping the soldiers, for example, we are trying to get the GI Bill, which would pay for 4 years of college for our soldiers who have served in Iraq and Afghanistan, for free. They have served this country. We need an economic recovery, we need brain power. These young men and young women should have 3, 4 years of college.

But the President says, we don't have the money and turns around and asks for \$140 billion in the supplemental to continue the war at \$12 billion a month.

Now, I don't think anyone is saying tomorrow, we are going to be able to pull out of Iraq. I think everyone knows that this would be a process. But what we are saying is why do we always have money for war, and then when our soldiers come back and we want to put them through college and reward the effort, all of a sudden the President says we don't have the money when he has just got done borrowing \$3 trillion.

I yield to my friend.

Mr. ALTMIRE. The gentleman is correct. For those who may be entering the chamber at this point or joining the debate, it may seem like this is a partisan argument. It's not. What we are discussing here are simply the facts of how we got to where we are today.

I won't dwell on that argument. I think we have talked about it, but it is definitely something to consider, as we move forward, that the reason we are where we are today is the direct result of the decisions that were made in public policy over the last several years.

When you hear people advocating ways to dig us out of the enormous hole that we are in, I would suggest it is worthwhile to look at what the outcomes have been of the policies that they have put forward over the years.

Lastly, and then we can move on to the GI Bill, because I think that's a very important discussion as well, we talk about the facts of the gas price issue. I would hope, maybe it would be helpful for us to get together with our friends on the other side and do one of these Special Orders one night.

I am sure Mr. PETERSON from Pennsylvania would love to join us that night. I have a world of respect for him and his knowledge on this issue, and he certainly knows it as well as anybody. Maybe we could get together one day with a group and have a debate, not a debate, a discussion on the issue and let the American people hear the arguments on both sides.

I think we certainly would be willing to do that on our side.

But when you hear the discussion, I think we need to look at the facts. You can have your own opinion. You can't have your own facts. We talked about the fact, the chart that is next to the gentleman.

As the number of wells and the number of drilling permits have gone up, gas prices have gone up right up along with it. It is incorrect, it is false, and don't let anybody get away with saying that as you increase the amount of oil that we are drilling for in this country, the price of oil is going to go down. That simply has not happened. We have experience over the past 4 and 5 years, as you can see on that chart.

But another fact that came up time and again, over the last couple of years, I heard it in the 2006 election from people in the State of Pennsylvania where I am from, I continued to hear it over the past couple of years, that China was drilling off the coast of Cuba in waters that were 60 miles from the shores of this country in Florida. I heard it time and again. China is drilling 60 miles from our shores, and that is alarming. That's an alarming fact. Or is it a fact?

What we found out is that China is not drilling off the coast of Cuba, and those on the other side who had been making that claim, some who hold extremely high office in this country, had to retract what they said and acknowledge that, in fact, they were mistaken on that. It may be an honest mistake in some cases.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Would the gentleman yield?

Mr. ALTMIRE. I would.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. I just want to share, because this is third-party validation.

Mr. Speaker, I would ask to have this submitted for the RECORD, all these quotes in order.

Vice President DICK CHENEY:

"Oil is being drilled right now 60 miles off the coast of Florida. We're not doing it. The Chinese are in co-

operation with the Cuban government." That was June 12.

Minority Leader BOEHNER:

"Right at this moment, some 60 miles or less off the coast of Key West, Florida, China has the green light to drill for oil in order to lower energy costs in that country. Do Congressional Democrats really trust the Chinese that much more than Americans?" That was from June 11 of this year.

Minority Whip ROY BLUNT:

"Even China recognizes that oil and natural gas is readily available off our shores; thanks to Fidel Castro, they've been given a permit to drill for oil 45 miles from the Florida Keys. U.S. energy producers can't go there, and that's because our Congress won't let them." That was also on June 11.

But then, as you stated earlier, Congressional Research Service says, facts, third-party validator, nonpartisan Congressional Research Service:

"While there has been some concern about China's potential involvement in offshore deepwater oil projects, to date its involvement in Cuba's oil sector has been focused on onshore extraction in Pinar del Rio province through its state-run China Petroleum and Chemical Corporation (Sinopec)."

From the Miami Herald, they had a quote from Jorge Pinon, an energy expert at the University of Miami:

"China is not drilling in Cuba's Gulf of Mexico waters, period." This gentleman, from Miami's Center for Hemispheric Policy, who supports oil and gas exploration, said he met with several congressional offices Wednesday about the China-Cuba connection. He said he told them: "If you guys want to use this as a scare tactic to lift the moratorium on drilling off the west coast of Florida, at least be factual, be correct. They didn't do their homework."

June 12, 2008

REPUBLICANS USE SCARE TACTICS TO PROMOTE FAILED "DRILL & VETO" ENERGY POLICIES OF THE PAST; GOP CLAIMS CHINA IS DRILLING FOR OIL OFF FLORIDA'S COAST PROVEN FALSE

American families and businesses are struggling to keep up with skyrocketing gas prices—now averaging a record high of \$4.06 per gallon across the country. Instead of working with Democrats to pass legislation addressing high energy costs and moving America to energy independence, Congressional Republicans are spreading scare tactics and proven falsehoods to push their failed "drill and veto" energy policies of the past.

Republican leaders—including Vice President Cheney—have recently claimed that China is drilling for oil off the coast of Cuba "60 miles off the coast of Florida." But the facts show China does not have a deepwater drilling contract in Cuba.

From the Congressional Research Service:

"While there has been some concern about China's potential involvement in offshore deepwater oil projects, to date its involvement in Cuba's oil sector has been focused on onshore oil extraction in Pinar del Rio province through its state-run China Petroleum and Chemical Corporation. (Sinopec)" [CRS, 2/29/08]

From today's Miami Herald:

"China is not drilling in Cuba's Gulf of Mexico waters, period. . . ." said Jorge Pinon, an energy expert at the University of Miami's Center for Hemispheric Policy. . . .

"Pinon, who supports oil and gas exploration, said he met with several congressional offices Wednesday about the China-Cuba connection. He said he told them: 'If you guys want to use this as a scare tactic to lift the moratorium on drilling off the west coast of Florida, at least be factual, be correct.' They didn't do their homework." [6/12/08]

The New Direction Congress is committed to bringing real relief to those feeling the pinch from high gas and diesel prices and ensuring the needs of families and businesses are put before the interests of Big Oil. The American people deserve the truth and a cleaner, greener, more energy efficient future.

Republican Scare Quotes:

Vice President Dick Cheney:

"[O]il is being drilled right now 60 miles off the coast of Florida. We're not doing it. The Chinese are in cooperation with the Cuban government." [6/12/08]

Minority Leader John Boehner:

"Right at this moment, some 60 miles or less off the coast of Key West, Florida, China has the green light to drill for oil in order to lower energy costs in that country . . . Do congressional Democrats really trust the Chinese that much more than Americans?" [6/11/08]

Minority Whip Roy Blunt:

"Even China recognizes that oil and natural gas is readily available off our shores; thanks to Fidel Castro, they've been given a permit to drill for oil 45 miles from the Florida Keys. U.S. energy producers can't go there, and that's because our Congress won't let them." [6/11/08]

Rep. George Radanovich (R-California):

"Florida, for example, has objected to U.S. oil exploration off its coast. But China, thanks to a lease issued by Cuba, is drilling for oil just 50 miles off Florida's coast. America's offshore drilling policy amounts to a government handout of U.S. natural resources to foreign countries in the name of environmental protection." [6/10/08]

Mr. ALTMIRE. That's the point that we are talking about. We are talking about facts. We can have a debate. We can have a discussion. There are clear differences of opinion. We are all on the same side. We all want to see gas prices lowered both in the short term and the long term. There is no animosity. This is not a game of gotcha.

It's unfortunate what happened to some of the individuals that you mentioned who put forward with great confidence a fact that turned out not to be true. But the point we are making is not gotcha. The point we are making is consider the history of the commentary that you hear from people, consider the factual basis which does not support their argument and consider the outcomes of the policies that they have put forward over the past 7 and 8 years, and that's leading us to where we are today. That's what we are talking about.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. That's exactly correct. That lets the facts speak for themselves. That's why we always have third-party validators and, as we stated earlier, go back to the war. Now you

have the President's former press secretary talking about what really happened:

"We're going to be able to use the oil for reconstruction."

"We're going to be greeted as liberators."

"We had nothing to do with outing a CIA agent."

"If we just keep cutting taxes for rich people, the middle class will at some point benefit, and we will stimulate the whole economy."

"The tax cuts lead to more revenue."

Is that why we borrowed \$3 trillion over the last 3 years?

And now it's if we just drill more, we're going to reduce the cost of gas, which is not the case. Or if we just drill in ANWR, we're going to significantly reduce the cost of gas. Then it was in the last week or two, China's right off the coast of Cuba stealing it from us. We should be there. Not true.

All of these have not been true, and now the same gentlemen who provided all of those arguments and used the bully pulpit to provide all those arguments are now saying, let's just keep going down the wrong road.

I yield to my friend.

Mr. ALTMIRE. Well, that's it. I think the gentleman hit the nail on the head. I don't know what more we could add on this issue.

Could I inquire to the Chair how much time we have remaining?

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. SPACE). The gentleman has 8 minutes.

Mr. ALTMIRE. Well, if we could talk for a minute about the GI Bill, as the gentleman mentioned, there is no group that should stand ahead of our Nation's veterans when it comes time to making policy decisions, plain and simple. I think most people in this Chamber would agree with that.

So what has this Congress done recently to help our Nation's veterans? Well, last year we had the largest increase in the 77-year history of the VA, health system funding increase. We have increased screening and treatment of traumatic brain injuries at every VA health care facility.

We have extended family and medical leave to cover our military Guard and Reserve. We have covered small business entrepreneurship opportunities for returning veterans. We have increased the capital and the grants and loans that are available to small business owners who served, themselves, in the Guard and Reserve. We have a tremendous record of achievement on veterans in this Congress.

What we are taking up this week, probably, is the GI Bill. As the gentleman said, the GI Bill has not been updated since 1944 and not modernized.

□ 2030

So we are talking about more than 60 years since the GI bill has been modernized. This Congress took a step to say if you serve in the military for 3 or more years since September 11, you will qualify for the new GI bill which

says you will be allowed to attend a State institution, State university in your State and we will pay for it because we want to thank you for what you have done for this country. You have earned that benefit. We can never thank you enough for putting your life on the line and the sacrifice that you have made and that your family made. So we are going to offer you something in the long run that will benefit all of us, educating people.

There is a continuing benefit to society of educating our veterans and giving them a step up so they can get out into society and continue their own careers, which helps everybody. And so we took that step in this Congress of modernizing the GI bill because it had been less than \$10,000 that were available under the current GI bill.

I think anyone who has kids who are going to college or had to pay for their college themselves realizes \$10,000 in today's world doesn't get you very far with regard to higher education.

We not only pay for the tuition at the State university rate in the State where the veteran lives, we also have a stipend for housing costs and ancillary things like books. We will not pay for everything, but we will help. And certainly the veterans who have earned that benefit deserve every penny of that, and I am sure the gentleman agrees.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Absolutely. One of the issues is we have in this country only 300 million people. We are now competing in a globalized economy with China and India and a variety of other rising economic countries. So we have to make a point that all of our 300 million citizens, a major disadvantage in human capital, are educated.

You've probably had a similar experience as I have had dealing with interns and staff members and people you have met back in the district. The benefits that a soldier brings to your organization, because of the discipline, the focus and the organizational skills, the ability to deal with situations that are very challenging, and you add to that a college degree or a master's degree or a Ph.D. or a law degree, you are talking about someone who is prepared to really contribute value to whatever organization they are joining, whether it is government or business. There can't be a better investment to make.

And why is it that we have enough wherewithal to borrow the money for the \$12 billion a month, but when these soldiers come back, the President says I'm going to veto that bill. We don't have the money for that bill.

I think of all of the issues that you mentioned earlier, it is important for us to recognize that last year under a Democratic Congress, led by Speaker PELOSI and HARRY REID, we made the largest increase for veterans' benefits in the 77-year history of the VA because as Democrats, we are committed to the soldiers. Whether you are on one side of the war issue or another, we all say we are behind the soldier. And

when the soldier comes home, you will have the health care and the benefits you deserve. And we want to add onto that this GI bill. So we have made that commitment and will continue to push for that commitment for this GI bill so we can reward the soldiers. It is important for us to deal with this issue.

All of these posters with all of the information can be found on the Speaker's Website, the 30-Something Website that we have. You will be able to find, you will be able to get all of these. All of these are available for Members to look at and analyze and to get a visual of what we have been talking about over the last few minutes.

Mr. ALTMIRE. We will close it out now, and we want to thank the Speaker for the opportunity to address the Chamber tonight.

Any of the charts that we have talked about, and I really would encourage Members to take a look at them, can be found on www.speaker.gov/30somethings.

TRAGEDY IN IOWA

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

Mr. KING of Iowa. Mr. Speaker, as always, it is a profound privilege to be recognized to address you here on the floor of the United States Congress.

I come here to the floor, and first I can't begin this discussion over the next 60 minutes without first taking up the issue of the natural disaster tragedies in Iowa. From my history and experience, I go back a ways working with the natural environment and the natural disasters we have had. I remember a tragic tornado at Belmond, I lived through the 1993 floods, and when my equipment and my livelihood was under water, I went to eastern Iowa and down to Keokuk to help out down there because it was the only thing I could do to improve the situation because mine was not in a condition where it could be helped, at least for a few days.

As I lived through those experiences and as the Katrina hurricane came up and in the aftermath of Hurricane Andrew, for example, I was one of the first Members of Congress to arrive down in New Orleans. I made multiple trips down there into the heart of it. I have something like 3,600 pictures taken of Hurricane Katrina's aftermath when New Orleans was full of water. I have been on the ground and in the air, and I have slept on the Red Cross cot and I looked the people in the eye who were underwater and still suffer from that tragedy. I am not without experience.

Personally, I lost a considerable amount in the floods of 1993; but also I have the experience as a Member of Congress who has gone into these disastrous areas in the world. And Hurricane Katrina being the heart and the worst of it.