

ENERGY POLICY

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

Mr. POE. Madam Speaker, I want to talk about the energy policy this Congress has passed recently. This Congress has decided to spend a lot of taxpayer money and subsidize this concept of corn-based ethanol in the United States.

We are sending a lot of money to farmers to grow corn so that it can be burned in our vehicles. Now, I don't blame the farmers for what they do. After all, we have encouraged them to produce corn-based ethanol.

But the problem with corn-based ethanol is it is a pollutant. Now we are finding out from Science Magazine that it's a pollutant more so than was first thought from the beginning. Because of the subsidies, we are encouraging corn-based ethanol.

It also has raised corn prices throughout the world because no longer are we eating corn, we are burning it in our vehicles. It has increased the amount of land that we are tilling up, grasslands, for example, forest, for example, and turning it into agricultural land where we produce corn-based ethanol to burn in our vehicles.

It's also expensive. Everything that has to do with corn products has raised in prices over the last 2 years because we are not using corn in our foodstuffs, we are burning it in our vehicles. But probably the greatest problem with corn-based ethanol is how it's produced. Corn is one of those commodities that takes a lot of fertilizer. In fact, it takes more fertilizer to produce corn than any other product that we eat, such as rice or wheat or even the grasslands.

Because that fertilizer is being dumped in the Midwest, it drains off in the rivers down the Mississippi River and comes into the Gulf of Mexico. One would argue, so what? Well, the problem with that is, fertilizer has nitrogen in it and phosphorus. That nitrogen and phosphorus, when it goes into the Gulf of Mexico, has created what is called now a dead zone.

It's called a dead zone because nothing lives there except algae. The fish, the ones that are there, have died unless they have moved way offshore, you know, out there off the continental coast where we don't drill for crude oil any more.

This map here shows, this is a NASA map, satellite photo, shows that it's about 470 miles along our gulf coast, Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi. It even goes all the way to Florida, but it also extends out in the gulf about 178 miles.

□ 2030

It's a dead zone. Nothing grows there. Nothing lives there but algae, and it's all because Congress with unintended consequences is encouraging the production of corn-based ethanol, and the fertilizer goes down the Mississippi

River and kills everything in this area. Madam Speaker, it stays for years. It gets bigger every year, this dead zone. It kills off the fish, and all of the fishermen along the gulf coast are having to go way out in the Gulf of Mexico out there where we don't drill for crude oil anymore, and they have to fish to get fish for Americans to eat.

Congress needs to reevaluate its policy of depending on some product that now not only is a pollutant but is an expensive pollutant, and it also creates havoc in the Gulf of Mexico by causing a dead zone. We need to be aware of such unintended consequences when Congress passes legislation.

Madam Speaker, we need an energy policy. We need an energy policy now—Americans demand it—but we also need some common sense in what we do, and maybe we should rethink the whole concept of corn-based ethanol because, after all, Madam Speaker, it's not going to save us all.

And that's just the way it is.

ENERGY INDEPENDENCE IN AMERICA

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. MURPHY of Connecticut). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Ohio (Ms. KAPTUR) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. KAPTUR. Mr. Speaker, the American people are crying out. The story in my district is no different than across our country. As gas prices continue to rise, Washington is deadlocked. The energy crisis is sapping our economic future coast to coast. Consolidation in the oil industry is putting a tourniquet on the heart of the American economy.

In 1983, the United States consumed about 18 percent of the world's oil supply. Today, with the price of oil at over \$135 a barrel, our share of world oil consumption has grown to over 25 percent. We only have 5 percent of the world's population, but we consume 25 percent of the global oil supply.

During the last 25 years, our country has gone from producing the majority of its oil domestically to importing most of our oil from abroad. So, since 1997, the United States' gluttony for oil has boiled over, and we've been consistently importing more than half of the oil we consume since the late 1990s. The increasing levels of oil importation have caused our structural deficit to skyrocket and have encouraged the creation of a pipeline that flows in the wrong direction—straight from the Middle East.

This pipeline is not carrying back our finished cars or windmills or solar arrays, but, instead, hundreds of billions of dollars every year from the American people's pockets are going to some of the most undemocratic regimes in the world.

The GAO has recently come to a conclusion which is obvious to the American people. As oil companies continue to consolidate, the price of oil spikes.

The GAO report shows that, for the seven large mergers they modeled, five led to increased prices. Especially with the ExxonMobil and MAP-UDS oil merger, gas prices have increased upwards of 2 cents a gallon. Since 1976, not a single refinery has been built in this country, and between 1991 and 2000, over 2,600 mergers in all segments of the U.S. petroleum industry have destroyed competition.

As fewer players control bigger segments of the industry, the American people lose. ExxonMobil reports earnings of \$40 billion in a single year, and as the price of gasoline increases, these firms merge into even larger and larger conglomerates.

This week, we passed into law a farm bill with over \$1 billion of incentives to begin converting a portion of our market to biofuels. That is long overdue. With gasoline prices reaching toward \$5 a gallon, it's time for action here in Washington. The other body and the President should join us in passing H.R. 1252, the Federal Price Gouging Prevention Act, H.R. 5351, the Renewable Energy Act and Energy Conservation Tax Act of 2008, and a renewable energy portfolio standard to bring these new energy technologies into our Nation's grid. While our House of Representatives has acted on these bills, we really need a commitment from the other part of this institution and up Pennsylvania Avenue.

As this summer's driving season begins, Americans will be brutally reminded that energy innovation will never materialize unless we develop public policy that prevents the big oil companies from manipulating and from controlling our market. In fact, we really lost control in 1998 when over half of our market came from someplace else. From investigations into the futures market to a comprehensive antitrust policy, we can get rid of the corruption, manipulation and speculation that have driven the cost of oil higher and higher to a point where many of our people simply cannot afford it. The way out of this is innovation and invention, and these very same companies should not throttle that invention in this country. In fact, they should be investing in it themselves.

This government needs to take a lead in helping every American, if they so choose, to become a producer on the roofs of their houses and in the fields in their regions. We could have wind farms, geothermal, fuel cells, biofuels, cryogenic hydrogen. All of these are a part of America in the 21st century.

Mr. Speaker, it's really difficult to be a Member of Congress and to see the future and yet not be able to gain a majority of votes in both Chambers and the real leadership of the President of the United States to meet this critical national need. America's energy dependence is our largest strategic vulnerability. It's time that we stopped trying to bring in oil from every place else on the globe and, rather, become energy independent here at home.