

that we will be back talking about this again. This issue is not going away. It's something that we all need to learn more about and we all need to work together. None of us have all the answers, but we need to work together as a Congress to try to find solutions as best we can.

With that, I thank all of my Blue Dog colleagues for joining me tonight.

ENERGY CRISIS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 18, 2007, the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. WESTMORELAND) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Mr. WESTMORELAND. Madam Speaker, Lord, I don't even know where to start. I've sat here for the last 45 minutes and listened to the Blue Dogs. And I appreciate them very much because there's about 40 or so of them, I think, and they could do a lot to help us, Madam Speaker, with the energy problem. I just hope that they will stand fast.

I listened to my colleague from Arkansas (Mr. ROSS). And I'm on his bill because it brings about more energy independence for this country, Madam Speaker. And it's interesting that the Blue Dogs talked a lot about all the things that we have done thus far, at least that the Democrats have done thus far, the majority, Madam Speaker. And I don't even know how to start to unravel some of the facts that have been laid out here tonight. There were some facts that I agree with, but there are some facts that are very, very misunderstood, and hopefully during this hour sometime, Madam Speaker, we can put some truth into it.

It's interesting that I heard some of the Blue Dogs talking about increasing oil production. And I know that in May of 2007 there was an amendment that we passed that prohibits us from drilling shale oil, where there's two trillion barrels of oil. Two of the speakers here tonight voted for that amendment to keep us locked out of that acreage out west where the shale oil is.

And Madam Speaker, if people could see this chart, May of 2007 is when the biggest spike in the oil prices happened. And I think that's a time when the speculators saw that this Congress was not going to do anything about our own oil production. We refused to do it. And I think the speculators took great advantage of this and said this is a country that's not going to look to their own resources, they're going to be totally dependent on foreign oil, so we'll do with them as we wish.

What has happened over the past, I guess, 3 or 4 weeks is people have been calling our office and calling me, Madam Speaker, and asking me if I had signed a petition; there have been several of them on the web page about "drill here, drill now, lower prices." There's petitions on there from the Sierra Club and other environmental

groups about not allowing people to drill. And as I got these petitions, and especially when I was at home, Madam Speaker, one day and I saw a petition on the counter of a gas station, and I guess the owner of the station had it there to give people something to do rather than talk bad to him about the price of gas, but it was a petition that said, "Sign here if you want to lower gas prices." And so I came up with an idea that what I would do is start a petition, Madam Speaker, in this House where the American people could know how their Congress person felt about increasing the oil production in this country to lower their price that they were paying for gas at the pump. And so we came up with this very simple thing. In fact, there is no legislation attached to this, there is no discharge petition, there is just a simple statement where Members of Congress can make a statement to their constituents, Madam Speaker, much like our constituents have been making their thoughts known to us by signing these petitions online and at local convenience stores. This simply says, "American energy solutions for lower gas prices. Bring onshore oil online. Bring deep water oil online. And bring new refineries online."

And I put everybody's district, all 435 and the seven delegates that we have that represent territories of the United States. It gave people the opportunity to sign. And it simply says, "I will vote to increase U.S. oil production to lower gas prices for Americans." And I don't care if it's the production of biodiesel fuel, biomass, oil, whatever it is, to make us less dependent on foreign oil.

And we've listened to a lot of the Blue Dogs tonight, but none of those Blue Dogs have signed this petition. And Madam Speaker, I have often learned in life that your walk has to match your talk. And some people say, well, this is just a political statement. It's not a political statement at all. We've had some Republicans sign it, we've had some not sign it. We've had some Democrats sign it, we've had some Democrats not sign it.

If you want to know if your Member has signed it, you can go to House.gov/westmoreland. And on that page we have those that have signed it and those that have refused to sign it. If you don't see their name in either spot, then we're going to take it that they did want to sign it, we've just not had a chance to talk to them personally, Madam Speaker.

But we believe that your walk should match your talk. And so we do have some Democrats on there, some people—NEIL ABERCROMBIE from Hawaii, a great leader, we have Mr. CAZAYOUX from Louisiana, Mr. MELANCON from Louisiana, some from Texas—that are on here because they believe that we need to increase our oil production to lower the gas prices, and we do. That's just a fact. We heard about all these biodiesel plants, and those are great. But you know what? Until we start

using our own natural resources—we see what the speculators did when we voted not to.

Now, oil came down \$4 a barrel. It came down, and I understand one of the reasons it came down is because Ms. PELOSI, the Speaker of the House, Madam Speaker, sent a letter to the President saying we need to get into the Strategic Petroleum Reserve. The Strategic Petroleum Reserve is a reserve of our petroleum that we have, millions of barrels of oil that we would have in an emergency, in a crisis, in a disaster. She wants to release that, which means to me, Madam Speaker, that she realizes that we need more oil, we need more production. But because of the radical environmentalists that have controlled the majority, or at least influenced the majority greatly, they cannot afford to do what we need to do politically; it's not politically correct for them.

I think that the American people, Madam Speaker, are tired of us in this body being politically correct. They just simply want us to do what's right, the things that we swore, took an oath that we would do, and that is to protect the American people.

And as the Blue Dogs said tonight, this is not just an economic policy, this is a national security interest that we have. And we've got to own up to our responsibility and make sure that we live up to the challenges that our constituents have given us by electing us to this body. We have got to act. We've got to get out of the fetal position, and we've got to act and do some things that will bring about some relief at the pump.

A lot of them in the past 45 minutes or the last hour or so have talked about all the great things we've done. Well, with all the bills that have been passed, I haven't noticed the price of gas coming down one dime. It's almost like putting lipstick on a pig. You can make it look good, but it's only going to be a pig. So we can make things look good, we can make things look like we're doing something, but all we're doing is just making a nice window for people to view at. It's time that we got down to some hard decisions. And there are some hard decisions that have got to be made.

And there are things that we are doing. We have put up discharge petitions—and I say "we," I'm talking about the minority party—but they're there for everybody to sign. The week of June 9, we put a discharge petition, "No More Excuse Energy Act of 2007." What that would do is it would reduce the price of gasoline by opening new American oil refineries, investing in clean energy sources such as wind, nuclear, capturing carbon dioxide, and making available more home-grown energy through environmentally sensitive exploration of the Arctic Energy Slope and America's deep-sea energy reserves. Now, what that takes is 218 Members to sign that discharge petition. We hear a lot of talk, but we don't see a walk.

The week of June 16, H.R. 2279, Madam Speaker, Expand American Refining Capability of Closed Military Installations. It would reduce the price of gasoline by streamlining the refinery application process—which in 2005 was passed by a Republican Congress and later stripped out by the new majority—and by requiring the President to open at least three closed military installations for the purpose of siting new and reliable American refineries. A lot of people, Madam Speaker, might not realize that we import refined gasoline of almost seven billion gallons a year, almost the same amount of diesel fuel, Madam Speaker, that we bring into this country because we do not have the refining capabilities. Not a refinery has been built since 1978.

The week of June 23 it was H.R. 5656, the Repeal of the Ban on Acquiring Alternative Fuels; reduce the price of gasoline by allowing the Federal Government to procure advanced alternative fuels derived from diverse sources like shale oil, tar sands, and coal-to-liquid technology.

Do you realize in the energy bill, Madam Speaker, that was passed by this majority, that Federal agencies cannot use these alternative fuels? We heard a lot tonight from the Blue Dogs about using alternative fuels, increasing alternative fuels, but yet we will not let our agencies use it.

The week of July 7, this week, H.R. 2208, Coal-to-Liquid Fuel Act, which, Madam Speaker, happens to be authored by a Democrat, reduces the price of gasoline by encouraging the use of clean coal-to-liquid technology, authorizing the Secretary of Energy to enter into loan agreements with coal-to-liquid projects that produce innovative transportation fuel.

□ 2100

There shouldn't be one Member of this body not on that discharge petition to say let our oil go.

The week of July 14, we are going to have H.R. 2493, Fuel Mandate Reduction Act of 2007. It will reduce the price of gasoline by removing fuel blend requirements and onerous government mandates if they contribute to unfavorable gas prices. Right now part of the problem that we have with the high gas prices in areas in California and other cities that don't meet the attainment is the boutique fuels that we have.

The week of July 21 brings H.R. 6107, the American Energy Independence and Price Reduction Act. It will reduce the price of gasoline by opening the Arctic energy slope to environmentally sensitive American energy exploration. The development footprint will be limited to 1/100 of 1 percent of the refuge, and revenue received from the new leases would be invested in a long-term alternative energy trust fund.

The week of July 28, right before we go on the August recess, H.R. 6108, Deep Ocean Energy Resources Act of 2008, reduces the price of gasoline by

enabling the United States to responsibly explore its own deep ocean to produce American energy. The bill would grant coastal States the authority to keep exploration 100 miles from their coastlines, and it would also allow States to share in the revenues received. As Mr. CAZAYOUX said today, it helps Louisiana protect their vital coastline and all the great natural resources that they have there.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to now yield to my friend Mr. ROSKAM to hear his comments.

Mr. ROSKAM. I thank the gentleman for yielding. Thank you for the time.

I am absolutely convinced, Mr. Speaker, that this is a pivotal time in our public life and it's a pivotal time that doesn't come along very often, the sense of clarity that has emerged across the country when gasoline is now knocking on the door of \$4.50 a gallon all across the country. Today as I left Wheaton, Illinois, \$4.17 a gallon. As I'm out in town hall meetings, as I'm literally walking in the parades over the 4th of July, everybody is coming together and saying, look, let's do something about this. And rather than having this whole opportunity just be squandered away, we have got an opportunity to move forward. And, unfortunately, the orthodoxy that is developed on the other side of the aisle is what my predecessor, Henry Hyde, used to call "government by bumper sticker." "Government by bumper sticker" says put cute little phrases on the backs of cars and that's the policy that is going to drive our country. Well, that's great. Bumper stickers are nice and cute when it's at \$2.50 a gallon. But in my district you know what people are saying? Rip the bumper stickers off and let's get serious about bringing a national policy as it relates to energy independence for the United States of America so that we're not creating the same elements of great risk where right now, as you know, we are funding both sides of the war on terror. When we go to the gas pump and the money that we are putting in and the taxes that we are paying, yes, we're protecting ourselves from terrorism. We are protecting ourselves with homeland security and domestic security efforts and our whole military infrastructure. But we are also putting money in the hands of regimes that are hostile, that are exporting terrorism and are being very provocative on the world stage.

So, Mr. Speaker, we have got a chance today in this Congress to bring together a wide-ranging coalition that has an interest and a desire to move forward on energy independence, and I think that the time is now. Part of it has to be exploring and continuing to unlock American resources. Part of it has to be that. You can't do the math. You can't ultimately come up with the types of solutions that are going to satisfy our energy needs and simply ignore the resources that are available in the Arctic, the resources that are available in the Outer Continental Shelf. So that has got to be part of it.

Part of it is we have got to put nuclear power back into this mix. We have had great obstacles in the past as it relates to nuclear energy. Look at France. They have done a tremendous job harnessing that energy, moving it in ways that don't have the same types of emissions problems that other elements do. Nuclear energy has to be a part of it.

The types of funding resources that would be available if we were to unlock those American resources that I talked about a minute ago could fund many of the R and D types of projects. Let me tell you about one in my district. I represent an institution called the Gas Technology Institute, GTI, in Des Plaines, Illinois. It's a wonderful program, a public/private partnership. They are the types of folks that are doing the R and D that looks into emerging technologies, and then they help hand that off to industry and applied science. They have got a technology that they are on the verge of that is an anti-idling technology. So here's what happens: If you're a commercial truck, if you're a commercial bus, they waste tremendous energy as they are idling, as they are at stoplights and moving and not moving in traffic. Well, the technology that GTI is developing moves this so that in a nutshell it's a solid-fuel oxide that literally saves us in terms of the amount of energy that's used, the emissions that are emitted. It's that type of R and D that can undergird the types of things that the gentleman from Georgia has been talking about, Mr. Speaker.

There is a whole host of opportunities here, and it's dynamic. The public knows it. The public is crying out for what? The public is crying out for this body to act, for this body to get over the nonsense of "government by bumper sticker," and to say, look, we can all come together. And we can get 218 Members, a majority of this House, to come together around commonsense ideas that strive for American energy independence. The gentleman from Illinois my colleague Mr. SHIMKUS has been a table pounder for clean coal technology. That can transform not only our region of the country in being an exporter, but it can literally transform how the United States begins to look in the future. So the opportunities are there.

I thank the gentleman for yielding. I'm very hopeful about what can come out of this. But it only comes out if there is a political will that develops that says we are going to put 218 votes up on that board and we're going to move the ball for the American public.

Mr. WESTMORELAND. I thank you for your comments. And just a couple of points that you made about the amount of money that we give to some of the people who are not friendly to us, even in our own hemisphere, we give Hugo Chavez \$170 million a day.

I hear the other side complain about what Big Oil makes, and I don't know.

Big Oil, according to the records and stuff I read, make about a 10 percent profit, and I am not saying if that's good or bad for their business. But what do they think Mr. Chavez is making off of \$170 million of U.S. dollars every day? And, listen, he is not our friend.

And the other thing that the gentleman has brought up is a great point, and we heard it today and I heard it on the floor earlier today that we need to all work together. Well, I agree we do need to all work together. But when the majority party brings the energy bills to the floor, some under suspension, when there's only 20 percent of debate on each side, no amendments, no committee hearings, no subcommittee hearing, no regular process, how are we all working together, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Speaker, you know if we are going to all work together, if we're going to all be part of the process, if all the people in this country—this is a republic. It is a representative form of government. And if I don't have an opportunity to amend or give input into the process, my people are shut out of the process. If there are no amendments, nobody on this side of the aisle and many people on this side of the aisle, the people they represent are shut out of the process.

So let's do all come together. Let's have an energy bill on the floor that can work, this open rule. We can have 435 plus the 7 delegates offer changes, offer solutions, as Mr. ROSKAM just did, about the people that have come up with solutions in his district; as Mr. SCOTT did previously about the biofuel in his district. We all have good ideas, but when we are shut out of the system, you can't work together. And I don't know what part of that the majority doesn't understand.

I would like to now yield to my colleague from Georgia, Dr. GINGREY.

Mr. GINGREY. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate very much my good friend and colleague from Georgia yielding, and I appreciate his taking the time and leading the time tonight to continue to talk about what I consider and what my constituents in the 11th district of Georgia, Northwest Georgia, feel is the most important, the single most important issue facing our Nation and, for that matter, political issue as well as we move toward these November elections.

People in my district told me on Monday, just yesterday, at a town hall meeting in Bartow County, Cartersville, Georgia, a great part of my district—a town hall meeting, Mr. Speaker, as you know, they are not partisan. You don't just invite Democrats or Republicans. You invite your constituents. And we probably had 50 people there. And I don't know if it was an equal mix. I guess since I won my election last time with 71 percent of the vote, it probably wasn't an equal mix, but there were some very bright young Democratic folks there who

probably in November won't vote for me. But we had a great discussion about this issue and just what Congressman WESTMORELAND is talking about in regard to the need to come up with a solution and not continue to play politics over this.

I have a couple of posters, if my colleagues will bear with me. I want you to take a test, one of these tests that I always loved taking in high school and college and even medical school, a multiple choice question. Sometimes you can guess. But I'm going to hold up this slide for my colleagues and ask them this question. And I appreciate my good friend from Illinois for helping me do this.

Question: How do we bring down the price of oil? A pretty simple, straightforward question. Well, it's multiple choice.

A, open up oil exploration in ANWR and the Outer Continental Shelf. ANWR, of course, the Arctic National Wildlife Reserve. That would be one of the choices.

B, build new oil refineries. That might be a pretty good choice. We haven't made it in the last 25 years, unfortunately. All the oil refineries in the United States, unfortunately, are down along the gulf coast, and we know all too well how dangerous a situation that is, especially as we are coming into what could be a rather horrific hurricane season.

Maybe choice C, commercially develop renewable energy. Now, we are talking about wind and solar, two perfect examples of renewable energy. In this country our electricity grid, we generate about 1 to 2 percent of our power from those renewable sources. We can do better. I absolutely think we can do better when countries like Germany probably are producing 30 percent of their energy from renewables.

Well, maybe you would pick, let's see, D, if my colleagues could again refer to this slide, commission new nuclear power plants. I think since the mid 1970s, we have not commissioned a new nuclear power plant. I used to work in one as a co-op student in Barnwell, South Carolina, when I was attending Georgia Tech. Clean, efficient, safe, a great source of energy. Maybe when the price of gasoline was \$1.50 a gallon, you might say, well, it's too expensive to start a nuclear power plant; but when it's \$4.10 a gallon, I think it's time to consider strongly nuclear power. That could be a good choice as the perfect answer to this question. How do we bring down the price of oil? France, I believe, if I am not mistaken, and my colleagues can correct me if I'm wrong, I think, produces about 80 percent of their energy from nuclear power, as do some of the Scandinavian countries, and I have been there and I have visited.

□ 2115

Let's see. How about choice number E, promote conservation? I think a lot of our colleagues on both sides of the

aisle and the American people would agree we ought to conserve. We are 300 million people, and a world population of 6 billion. If my math is correct, and I took six quarters of calculus at Georgia Tech, that is not 25 percent of the world population, but we are using 25 percent of the world production of fossil fuel. That is too much. And we need to bring it down, and we can do that. I think maybe that would be a good choice.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, choice number F. That says: All of the above. I won't keep you in suspense too much longer as we move to my second and last slide. The answer clearly is F, all of the above. We have got a few pictures here kind of pointing that out. Oil and natural gas off of the Outer Continental Shelf, including the Gulf of Mexico, the eastern part of the Gulf of Mexico, where we are prohibited from drilling, where there are literally trillions of barrels, trillions of cubic feet of natural gas and billions of barrels of oil when you add that eastern Gulf of Mexico and the Pacific and Atlantic coasts of our country.

But the picture shows it all; nuclear power, wind and solar, drilling, of course, in the Arctic National Wildlife Reserve, which is a tiny portion, 2,000 acres out of 19 million, as depicted here in this corner of Alaska.

So this is basically, Mr. Speaker, and I appreciate very much Mr. WESTMORELAND letting me develop this point of argument that people in my district clearly yesterday let me know that this is what they want. They want a balanced approach, and all of the above is what we need to do. That is exactly what Mr. WESTMORELAND has been saying, and my colleagues, repeatedly.

We are ready, Mr. Speaker, and I turn to my colleagues on the Democratic side of the aisle, the majority, who has the ability, the power. They can control everything that comes to this floor. And it's time to worry less about monkey bites and more about the people of this country suffering.

I think Mr. WESTMORELAND earlier used the expression: Let my oil and gas flow. It made me think a little bit biblical. I don't want to get too biblical because I will get out of my lane in a hurry, Mr. Speaker. But it's like Moses said to Pharaoh: Let my people go. Moses wouldn't do it, he wouldn't do it. He promised time after time. He kept reneging, even though his own people were suffering tremendously. I don't know what he was betting on back there many thousands of years ago, but he was wrong. He finally did let the people go.

I don't know what game, Mr. Speaker, the Democratic majority is playing. I don't understand it. If they look at the polls, if that is the way they are making their decisions on legislation, people, Democrats, Republicans, independents by a wide majority want a solution. They want a comprehensive approach. We are ready. We are reaching out. We are literally begging. That is

why we are here tonight, saying to our colleagues on both sides of the aisles, Let's get this done. Let's get it done ASAP, and that means as soon as possible, before we leave this town at the end of July and walk away from here for a month's break. Shame on us if we don't get this done.

I yield back to my colleague.

Mr. WESTMORELAND. I want to thank my colleague from Georgia. That was a great test. I think anybody, anybody in the United States should be able to pass that test, Dr. GINGREY. I am glad you put it up, because that simplified it.

This is something, this little simple petition, I will vote to increase U.S. oil production to lower gas prices for Americans; 435 lines. So far, we have 191 signatures. This is just telling the American people we are ready to do all of the above. If you want to find out if your Member has signed this simple petition, much like the petitions that many of these people have signed, Mr. Speaker, that are listening to us, have gone on the Internet and signed petitions saying, Hey, drill here, drill now, lower our prices, and bring the U.S. back to being dependent—back from being dependent on foreign oil, go to House.gov/westmoreland and you will find out if your Member has signed, refused to sign, or is in the category of not making a decision because, Mr. Speaker, I feel like the American people are going to have to make the majority party understand that they want some change.

See, in April of 2006, then minority leader, now Speaker PELOSI made a statement that the Democrats had a plan. They had a commonsense solution to the skyrocketing price of gas. Of course, gas was about \$2.05 then. So we are still waiting on that solution. We are still waiting on that commonsense plan. It hasn't been unveiled yet.

Although, in January of 2007, H.R. 6, the Energy Independence and Security Act, Dr. GINGREY, was passed in this House. The Republicans called it the "no energy" policy. I will read you some of the key words. This was a 300-something page bill. Crude oil was mentioned five times in that bill. Mr. Speaker, gasoline was mentioned 12 times. Exploratory drilling was mentioned twice in a 316-page bill about energy independence.

Offshore drilling was mentioned zero; domestic drilling, zero; domestic oil, zero; domestic gas, zero; domestic fuel, zero; domestic petroleum, zero. Gas price or gas prices, zero. Commonsense, zero.

Now what was mentioned was greenhouse, 103 times. Green building was mentioned 101 times; ecosystem, 24 times; climate change, 18 times; regulation, 98 times; environmental, 160 times; geothermal, 94 times; renewable, 333 times; swimming pool, 47 times, because there was a swimming pool safety bill in the Energy Independence and Security Act.

Lamp, CFL, the new fluorescent lamps, 350 times. Three-hundred fifty

times. Contains mercury. Only produced in China. We can't even dispose of it. If you drop one, you need to put on a mask, evacuate the house, let it air out until you can clean up a broken light bulb.

This was the commonsense plan, I hope not, that then Speaker PELOSI, then Minority Leader PELOSI was talking about bringing up, because gas has almost doubled, or more; maybe doubled when this commonsense plan came out.

But I want to read you one thing before I yield to my friend from Illinois. This was a statement made on January 18, 2007, the day, Mr. Speaker, this bill was passed. It says, "It is sad to see the Republicans come to this. Now, they laughably say that this will lead to higher prices." That was Mr. PETER DEFAZIO from Oregon on how the Democrat's 2007 energy bill would affect gas prices. "It is sad to see the Republicans come to this. Now, they laughably say this will lead to higher prices."

Well, Mr. Speaker, I'd hate to say this, and I hate to say this, but we were right. It has led to higher prices. It has led to oil going out the roof because now the speculators in this world know that we, as a country, are not going to become energy independent as long as the leadership continues the course that they are on right now.

I'd like to yield to my friend from Illinois, a great leader in the energy battle and somebody that I think has made some real movement in the policy here, and that's Mr. SHIMKUS.

Mr. SHIMKUS. I thank my colleague.

Mr. Speaker, it's great to be on the floor tonight, coming back from a week's break, and I'm sure everybody is coming back with the number one issue on their mind, which is high energy prices. If they are not, they were traveling overseas and they were looking at the gas prices overseas. I mean if they were home, I don't think you could find anyone who wasn't talked to about high energy prices.

I learned a couple of things. I did a couple of radio shows. One, I just think because many of us have been talking about this issue for so long, we have to be careful that we don't become a little energy arrogant and continue to help educate the public on the basic economic principles of the law of supply and demand. That is what we are basically addressing tonight, and it's really difficult to understand how what students are taught in a basic economics course at the college level is not understood here on the floor of the House of Representatives.

The other thing I learned on a radio show yesterday, a person called in and said, When are you guys going to talk about drilling in the Outer Continental Shelf? I wanted to reach through the wires and grab that caller and say, What do you think we have been doing for 10 weeks straight on the floor of the House?

I want to encourage my colleagues to not give up, not lose hope. We have got

to continue to talk about this. So I appreciate you grabbing the time, allowing us to come down on the floor.

I was going to ask how many folks have signed. You said 191 have signed the petition. I know we have some Democrats who have signed it. I saw one before the break. We know that we would like more. We know the challenges that they are under not to do that. But I think come election time, as we get closer, we have a production majority here on the floor of the House. I know it. I know who they are. If we can get a bill to the floor.

I wish my colleague, Mr. ROSKAM was here. I was up in Chicago with him today. He talked about the gas price in Wheaton, which is his hometown, his home area. But we had to drive to the airport. We drove past gas stations, \$4.47 in the Chicago area. That is not including climate change, which would add another 50 cents. So you're already over \$5 a gallon. That is what we are looking at. Because here's the basic problem. I have tried to be a little less rancorous in my debate.

When the Democrats took over, \$58. Today, it's \$140. When President Bush came in, it was \$23 a barrel. All I am saying when I hold this chart up is the trend line is bad. It doesn't matter where you go, whether you go when Bush got sworn in or whether you go here when the Democrats took control or whether you look at the price today, that trend line is not positive, and it disproportionately hurts middle class, the lower middle class, rural, small town citizens of our country, which I represent.

I represent 30 counties in southern Illinois. We have to drive long distances to get to health care, we have to drive long distances to get to our schools. We have to drive long distances to get to our work. You know what? The poor can't afford the Priuses of the world right now. The poor are purchasing used cars off the lots because that is the only thing they can afford. So if that is the problem, the question is: What is the solution?

My colleague from Georgia did a great job. All of the above. Let's open up the Outer Continental Shelf, let's use fuel from coal, let's go wind and solar, let's do the renewal fuels. The great thing about our position is, and I got asked numerous times, Well, what about solar? I said, Great. What about wind? I am going to have a big wind generation field in my district. I'm happy about it, excited about it, and pledged to do all I can to help.

So I say, Bring it on. Any idea we have to help decrease our lives of imported crude oil by bringing on more supply, decreasing—we talked about conservation. Our citizens are conserving now. They are forced to conserve because of the high cost. So we are driving less miles this year than we were last year. Driving less miles and we are paying more. That is kind of the Democrat energy policy, drive less, pay more. I don't like that.

Mr. WESTMORELAND. If you would yield for just a minute.

Mr. SHIMKUS. I'd be happy to.

Mr. WESTMORELAND. When these energy bills have come to the floor, have you been able to offer an amendment for some of your ideas that you have had here to present it to see if your constituency and your ideas could possibly be heard on this floor?

□ 2130

Mr. SHIMKUS. Well, you know the best way for a bill to get passed and signed into law, especially with a Republican President, is to work through the committee process. A lot of this would start in my subcommittee, the Energy and Air Quality Subcommittee, chaired by a good friend of mine. In fact he is a cosponsor of the Boucher-Shimkus bill.

If allowed, we could move an energy security bill that would really address what Americans want, which is to decrease our reliance on imported crude oil from those countries that are enemies of our state or unstable; focus on North American energy, that means the deployment of all our energy resources; continues our great relationship with Canada and Mexico; do the renewables, do the efficiency standards, and move.

So the answer is no. All the bills have come to the floor without any committee hearings. The only thing we have been able to do is offer motions to recommit. We have done that numerous times on alternative fuel standards, which would bring in coal-to-liquid. We have done that on other generation issues. Of course, they are more of a party-line vote, and they all fail.

But historically, in votes that have been cast on this floor since 1994, the facts just speak for themselves: 90 percent of all Republicans support more supply; 90 percent of all Democrats do not support more supply. They vote against more supply, they vote against refineries. But there is 10 percent. The Speaker pro tempore is a friend of the fossil fuel area, I understand. They are there. We just need to help them help us help the country.

Mr. WESTMORELAND. So what I hear you saying is we need to take the politics out of this, and we need to put people in front of power, and we need to put process in front of politics and do something that will move this country toward energy independence, rather than just staying in the fetal position, so-to-speak, that we have been in, and being held hostage by radical environmentalists who the majority may feel is a big part of their base. I don't want to put words in your mouth.

Mr. SHIMKUS. One of the reasons why we are not in the Outer Continental Shelf is an oil spill I think that happened in 1969. I was 11 years old. I have changed a lot, maybe some good, maybe some bad. I was 11 years old. That is 39 years ago. Technology has improved greatly. Katrina is a perfect example. When Katrina came up the

Western Gulf, tell me the major environmental disaster that occurred on the deep drilling, 5 miles deep, because of that massive hurricane? The answer is none.

Mr. GINGREY. If the gentleman will yield on that point, I think the gentleman was referring to the Exxon Valdez tanker.

Mr. SHIMKUS. No. No.

Mr. GINGREY. Well, that situation I think needs to be answered. A lot of people say, well, we don't want to drill on the Outer Continental Shelf, the coast of California, because we may contaminate the San Francisco Bay. As the gentleman from Illinois pointed out, and I will yield back quickly, even during the hurricanes, when these oil rigs were blown over, not one drop of oil was spilled. But this tanker that was coming from the Middle East with hundreds of thousands of gallons of petroleum, it cracks up and that is where you get the spills.

That is why I would say to the environmentalists, help us solve that problem, so we don't have to import all this raw petroleum from other countries.

Mr. SHIMKUS. Just let me address one thing. Of course, Speaker PELOSI made an announcement that she wants to now empty the Strategic Petroleum Reserve, a very foolish proposal. One is because that is there for our national security in case the sea lanes get closed. Since we don't have enough production on our own, like the farmers would say, it is like eating the seed corn. If you eat the seed corn, you have no seed to plant for the next year. Foolish. Foolhardy. A scary proposal. Versus moving in the discharge petition we will talk about coal-to-liquid technologies.

Better than to pump out the Strategic Petroleum Reserve, let's develop gas from our own coalfields. There is 250 years worth of supply in Southern Illinois. There are American jobs mining it, American jobs building the refinery, American jobs operating the refinery, American jobs building the pipeline to American jobs, wherever that goes. Whether it is diesel fuel, gasoline, or whether it is aviation fuel, we can do it.

Don't do something silly, which is take the Strategic Petroleum Reserve, pump all that oil out of there, and then you are done. You have no reserves.

Mr. WESTMORELAND. Right now, one of the reasons we are not being held hostage by our enemies, the people that supply us with our oil, is because we have the Strategic Petroleum Reserve. If it was zero, trust me, we would have a bad time getting any oil.

Mr. SHIMKUS. I want to thank you for the time. I know I have another colleague that would like some. I just think it is very telling. I know my good fossil fuel Democrats are starting to fight I think the good fight. But here is what a Democrat staffer said today: "Right now, our strategy on gas prices is drive small cars and wait for the wind."

My constituents will not put up with that. First of all, we drive big trucks to haul feed, to haul livestock, to move farm equipment around, and we can can't operate with a four cylinder electric engine on a major pickup truck.

Mr. WESTMORELAND. With a sail on the top of it.

Mr. SHIMKUS. I thank you for the time. I appreciate it.

Mr. WESTMORELAND. I am going to yield now to my classmate that we came in together, my colleague from Texas, where there are thousands of jobs every day where people go to work working in oil fields, and that is my friend MIKE CONAWAY from the great State of Texas.

Mr. CONAWAY. I want to thank my friend.

There was an interesting headline and a couple of sentences in today's Hill newspaper, one of the leading newspapers in all of Washington, DC, by the way. It says, "The Energy Bill is Out of Gas." The lead sentence is, "House Democrats are in a bind on the focal point of their energy plan. Worried that a floor vote on any energy related measure will trigger a Republican-forced vote on domestic drilling, the leadership has scrubbed the floor schedule of the energy legislation that it vowed to tackle after the 4th of July recess." Politics, Mr. Speaker.

I spent all week in West Texas and Central Texas, an area that is blessed with a lot of crude oil and natural gas production. There are an awful lot of folks that make a living in drilling and producing crude oil and owning the minerals and owning the land that it is produced from. And I heard every day, why are these prices so high? Why can't we do the logical, rational things to lower these prices.

So if I am hearing that from a district that is very pro oil and gas, very pro drilling, I can't imagine what my Democrat colleagues heard on the other side. I was able to look them in the eye and say, Mr. Speaker, I am for it. Let's drill ANWR. Let's drill Outer Continental Shelf. Let's do all those things, all five things that my colleague from Georgia talked about. Let's do all those things.

I can't imagine any of my colleagues going back and facing their constituents, their voters, and looking them in the eye and say no, it is really best that we keep these prices high. It is really in your best interests that we don't drill Outer Continental Shelf, we don't drill ANWR. It is really in the best interests of the United States to continue to buy crude oil from folks who hate our guts, from a clown in Venezuela. That is really the best public policy.

I am surprised we had 300 people voting here tonight, because had I gone home and done that, I'd have got lynched, and it wouldn't have been a new rope.

I am going to make two points. We have some natural allies in this fight, and they come down here almost every

single night and rail about NAFTA and CAFTA, the anti-trade crowd. Where are they in this particular issue?

You know, they gripe about us exporting jobs to the other parts of the world. They gripe about the impact that NAFTA and CAFTA have, all the bilateral agreements. They vote against them. They just rail about them. Why aren't they down here screaming about this issue? Because every well that is drilled in the Outer Continental Shelf and ANWR, every plant that is an oil shale plant, the coal-to-liquid, those are American jobs. And that is what the anti-trade folks are all about, is American jobs. Every new refinery that is built, those are American jobs.

The other natural ally is most all of those refinery jobs are union jobs. Now, the domestic drilling, et cetera, isn't much unionized. But in the refinery world, those are union jobs. Where are those guys?

Mr. WESTMORELAND. If you will yield for just a second, every bill that has been passed through here has had Davis-Bacon, which is the union pay scale, attached to everything we have passed through here. So I am sure if they pass something, if they ever did about building a refinery, I am sure Davis-Bacon would be added to it.

Mr. CONAWAY. It would make it a little unpalatable for some of us who don't like Davis-Bacon.

Mr. WESTMORELAND. I understand, but I am sure it would be part of what they do.

Mr. CONAWAY. I am sure you are right. If the unions, for goodness sakes, could force a vote on card check, an absolute walk-the-plank vote across America, a 90 percent issue, if they could force our colleagues across the aisle to vote for a card check bill, why can't they force our colleagues to vote for an American refinery bill?

The other point I want to make is we hear this glib little smart aleck remark that, well, we can't just drill our way out of this problem. You know, that is shallow and insincere. I mean, it is just insulting, quite frankly.

The raw mechanics are that every well that is drilled, not only in the United States, but in the world, has a finite amount of crude oil and natural gas that will be produced out of that well. That is a finite resource. And so if we have got 86 million barrels of production today and we produce 86 million barrels, we have got to find 86 million new barrels to tack on to maintain just flat, where we are, because demand is continuing to grow.

Night after night, we come down and talk about demand growth in India, demand growth in China, demand growth in the United States. So in order to just stay flat, we have to continue drilling if we are going to use crude oil and natural gas as a source to drive automobiles and trucks and airplanes, which we are.

The real issue is not the ultimate end game of weaning ourselves off of crude

oil, as an example. That is not going to happen in my lifetime, but it will happen one of these days. But we all agree where we are trying to get to.

The difference in our conversation between us and the guys on the other side of the aisle is, what do we do between now and then? We all want to get there, but how do we get between now and then?

Crude oil is a finite resource. It will always get more expensive. There will be ups and downs, but it is going to get more expensive. How we manage that growth, those increases in costs of crude oil, how we buffer against those increases is really in our best interests. And, quite frankly, the commonsense plan that the Speaker has either kept to herself or not, I can understand why she didn't roll it out in 2006, because we were in charge and we might try to steal the good idea and implement it and take credit for it. But we have been out here better than 18 months now and we still haven't seen that commonsense plan to address gasoline prices. Not the overall energy thing, but to address gasoline prices, which she spoke about.

So I heard it loud and clear all week long, on every stop, every town hall meeting, every coffee shop, every conversation that I had. "You know, what is the deal with drilling offshore? What is the deal with drilling in ANWR? What is the deal with oil shale, coal-to-liquid, all these kinds of things? Why is there a political issue going on?" Because these solutions don't wear party jerseys, you wouldn't think.

It is really what is in the best interests of America. This is not about Republicans. It shouldn't be about Democrats. This ought to be about a rational, thoughtful, straightforward energy policy for America that takes advantage all our natural resources and exploits those natural resources until we can move to whatever is next for the internal combustion engine that revolutionized America and the world coming out of the 19th century into the 20th century.

So I appreciate my colleague letting me get up here tonight and rant and rave a little bit and spit all over the folks sitting down here in front of us. But this is important stuff. And our cutesy little sayings, we use them, the guys on the other side of the aisle use them, we can't drill our way out of it, use it or lose it, all that little nonsense, is disrespectful for the seriousness of this particular policy. Emptying the Strategic Petroleum Reserve, I had not heard her say that.

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As long as we can buy crude oil, let's buy it. Let's keep our savings or the Strategic Petroleum Reserve for that weird eventuality when we can't get it from anywhere else and we have got to try to figure out a way to survive in that environment. How we deal with the cost of crude oil, you, you don't take the savings out of the ground for

that; you drill or do whatever you have to. But that is a really bad idea and one that is not a particularly thoughtful idea that seems to be rampant in this environment.

Mr. WESTMORELAND. I think it is interesting, you mentioned the Strategic Petroleum Reserve and the letter that Speaker PELOSI wrote to the President. It is interesting that oil came down \$4 a barrel. Now, if it will come down \$4 a barrel on just a letter going to the President asking him to take the crude out of the Strategic Petroleum Reserve, think of what it would do if we voted in this body to drill without even sticking a drill in the ground. These speculators would run for the hills. And so I think you make a great point. And trust me, if we didn't have the Strategic Petroleum Reserve, we would not be getting oil from our enemies because they would know that they had us down.

Mr. Speaker, in closing, we have got just a few more minutes here, let me just say this. I think what you have heard tonight is that this is an all-of-the-above solution. It is all of the above. But a very important part of this is this country producing oil, to increase our oil production.

RAHM EMANUEL on TV said, yes, increasing oil production is part of the solution. The Speaker has acknowledged that increasing oil production or at least having more oil is part of the solution. But as my colleague from Texas said, we don't need to take that out of our savings account. We need to bring it out of our natural resources, out of the ground.

Senator SCHUMER in the Senate about 3 weeks ago said that if we could just get Saudi Arabia to increase oil production 1 million barrels a day, it would drop the price of gas 50 cents a gallon. I don't know if that is true or not, but at least on the other side of this building some of the Democratic leadership understands that increasing oil production would bring down the price of gas.

I don't know why it is so hard to get a bill like that to this floor. I think the reason is strictly politics. It is strictly the radical environmental groups that has a grip or their claws into this majority.

And so I think what is happening is we are putting power above people, we are putting politics above process. Because as these gentlemen have talked tonight, with these ideas that they have shared they have not had one opportunity to offer one amendment on the energy bills because they have been brought either under suspension, under a closed rule, no committee hearings, no subcommittee hearings. The process has been broken. And so when the process is broken, the product is flawed.

Let me just close with this: www.house.gov/westmoreland. Mr. Speaker, go there, see if your Member has signed this simple petition that says I will vote to increase U.S. oil production to lower the gas prices for Americans.