

# NEW TRENDS IN THE GROWING AFGHAN DRUG ECONOMY

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

Mr. KIRK. Mr. Speaker, with the increasing number of cross-border attacks in Afghanistan that are coming from the Waziristan region of Pakistan, it is more important than ever to develop a complete picture of where al Qaeda and the Taliban terrorists are hiding and especially of how they are funded.

Last month, the Defense Department finally recognized what many of us in the Congress have been saying for years. The report states: "Narcotics-related activities are fueling the insurgency in Afghanistan and, if left unchecked, threaten the long-term stability of the country and the surrounding region." It continues: "The emerging nexus between narcotics traffickers and the insurgency is clear. Narcotics traffickers provide revenue and arms to the Taliban while the Taliban provides protection to growers and traffickers and keep the government from interfering with their activities." In short, the Taliban has become a fully functioning, South Asian narco-terrorist organization, protecting the source of 92 percent of the world's opium.

Production is so high now that the price is dropping after years of record crops. Never one to ignore market forces, Afghan drug kingpins are now expanding into new illicit markets, and they have become the major supplier of the global cannabis and hashish markets.

Now, Morocco used to be the traditional main source for hashish in the world, but that is rapidly changing. Morocco has been marginalized in favor of Afghanistan. According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, Morocco used to be the source of 31 percent of the world's hashish, but by 2006, the number dwindled to just 18 percent.

In contrast, the U.N. now reports that cannabis cultivation in Afghanistan has more than doubled since 2004. In 2004, 30,000 hectares were under cultivation. In 2007, that number had risen to 70,000, much of which is protected and nurtured by the Taliban as their new source of income.

U.N. figures also show that cannabis cultivation is surging in Taliban strongholds, including in the Kandahar, Uruzgan, Paktika, Zabol, and Helmand Provinces. If the Great Plains are the breadbasket of America, then these Afghan Provinces make up the production heartland of the international narcotics trade.

The U.N. report also notes that, in these southern provinces, all of the farmers growing poppy and now cannabis pay taxes of, roughly, 10 percent of revenues to antigovernment elements, including to the Taliban and to al Qaeda. Taliban presence is highest in

the provinces with the greatest drug production, and violence follows wherever the Taliban is present.

In the heroin heartland of the Helmand Province, the bloodshed is dramatically higher than in all other Afghan provinces. Militants launch an attack every 32 hours in Helmand, compared to just one attack every 3 or 4 days in the rest of the country or just one attack a week in Kabul.

The shift demonstrates that it's time for the United States and for our NATO allies to take a stronger stand against the narcotics trade of Afghanistan. Even the Defense Department now acknowledges a clear link between drug trafficking and terrorist financing, a concept that used to be very controversial in Afghanistan, but that is now clear.

Of course, in Colombia, we learned that drugs and terrorism must be fought simultaneously. In Afghanistan and Pakistan, we must take the lessons learned in Colombia to understand that counterterrorism programs will not work unless there is also an effective counternarcotics program to eliminate the Taliban's source of money.

Mr. Speaker, while partisan feelings in the House surround the mission in Iraq, the challenges of the Afghan mission are overshadowed. The Afghan war is sometimes described as the "good war" or as the "bipartisan war" or as the "war that our allies support." It is certainly true that our forces in Afghanistan enjoy stronger support from the American people and from our allies overseas. While we have a NATO command in Afghanistan, our strong allied support for this mission should not blind us to the growing problems and dangers emerging for our troops.

The reality is this: Heroin has financed the resurgence of al Qaeda and the Taliban, and they have now found a new source of money—hashish and cannabis—which provide, in our estimate, hundreds of millions of dollars to finance terror. The lessons of FARC's decline in Colombia are clear: To wipe out terror, you have to attack its income. In both Colombia and Afghanistan, that income comes from narcotics.

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

(Mr. SKELTON addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

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

(Mr. POE addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

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

(Mr. DEFAZIO addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

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

(Mr. CALVERT addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

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

(Mr. MCHENRY addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

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

(Mr. BURTON of Indiana addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

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

(Mr. FLAKE addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

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

(Mr. MORAN of Kansas addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

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

(Mr. GARRETT of New Jersey addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

## ENERGY

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

Mr. BARTON of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

We are going to do something a little bit differently this evening on the House floor. We have a 1-hour Special Order of the minority and a 1-hour Special Order of the majority. The minority leader and the Speaker have agreed to combine those two Special Orders so that both sides can participate in the debate about energy policy. I will be leading the minority side, and the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr.

ALTMIRE) is going to be leading the majority side.

In the first hour, it is my understanding that I will control time for both sides, and in the second hour, the gentleman from Pennsylvania will control the time for both sides. We are going to try to operate in such a fashion of cooperation which, I think, will be refreshing in this Chamber so that both sides end up, at the end of the 2-hour period, with equal amounts of time.

In Special Orders, you don't yield for specific amounts of time, so what we're going to attempt to do, between looking at the two clocks that are publicly visible and between the staff members who have clocks, is to make sure that we balance the time out.

So, before we get started in the actual substantive debate, I'd be happy to yield to my good friend from Pennsylvania for whatever introductory remarks he wishes to make about the procedure.

Mr. ALTMIRE. I thank the gentleman from Texas.

It is my understanding that this format has not been attempted since the 1990s, under Speaker Gingrich. So this is a recent historical event that we're engaged in here, and I really do appreciate the gentleman and the ability to work with him, and I appreciate the gentleman from Georgia and others for talking about energy prices and gas prices. That is what we're going to do over the course of the next 2 hours.

Again, just to lay the ground rules, because it is a Special Order, all time in the first hour will flow through the gentleman from Texas. All time in the second hour will flow through our side, but we want this to be an engaging discussion where we yield back and forth and ask questions and inquire of each other.

We're going to keep this above board. This is not a game of gotcha. This is to have a legitimate, honest discussion about energy prices, about the drilling issue, about the speculation issue, and about the Strategic Petroleum Reserve.

On our side, we're going to be joined by Members who have engaged on this issue, such as Chairman RAHALL of the Natural Resources Committee. Chairman RAHALL is going to talk about the 68 million acres of land that are available, an issue that we know about, and that will come up. BART STUPAK of Michigan, Congressman STUPAK, is going to talk about the speculation issue along with Congressman MURPHY from Connecticut. We're going to have Congressman HALL from New York, who is going to talk about the Strategic Petroleum Reserve. Others are welcome, who may be watching this as we speak, to join us throughout the evening.

Those are generally the issues that we're going to talk about, so I really do appreciate the gentleman from Texas for yielding the time. We're going to keep this on a balanced level over the

next 2 hours, generally an hour on our side and an hour on the Republican side. I look forward to the discussion.

So, at this time, I will yield back to the gentleman from Texas.

Mr. BARTON of Texas. I thank my friend from Pennsylvania.

I am going to yield myself such time as I may consume.

Well, Mr. Speaker, we have before us, as we have this debate on the floor of the House of Representatives, a very serious situation. We have energy prices worldwide, certainly, but in the United States of America, specifically, we have energy prices that have gone up quite a bit in the last several years.

If you will look here, you will see that, in February of 2007, as to the price of unleaded gasoline at the pump, the national average was \$2.30 a gallon. By the end of June of this year, it was at \$4.07. The numbers that were given to me this afternoon when I got off the airplane show that, today, it closed at \$4.11 a gallon for gasoline, which is a record. For diesel, it's about \$4.82 a gallon.

If you will look at natural gas prices, which are used both in industry and to heat our homes in the winter and to cook our food year round, in February of last year, for 1,000 cubic feet of natural gas, it was \$6.60. By June, it was up to, which was the average nationally, \$10.21. We expect that, by this fall, the average national price is going to be \$12 for 1,000 cubic feet.

Now, if we sit here in the United States and do nothing, these prices are going to stay where they are and are going to go higher. The good news is that we have more domestic energy resources in this country than in any other country in the world.

To just give a comparison, on this chart here, the purple and the green and the blue are the amount of oil imports on an average basis per day that we're importing from three of our largest sources of imports. You can see that, from Nigeria, we're getting approximately 1 million barrels a day, from Venezuela, about 1,250,000 barrels a day and, from Saudi Arabia, about 1,500,000 barrels a day of oil.

The orange bar, or the red bar, to the right shows the estimates from the Minerals Management Service, the most recent estimates of the amount of domestic energy supply that could be produced at today's prices and with today's technology. If we were to produce in the Outer Continental Shelf, in the areas that are currently off limits but that we think could be produced in terms of a drilling program, that, by itself, equals the amount of imports from Saudi Arabia.

□ 2015

If we add the Alaska National Wildlife Reserve, which we're going to talk about in some detail, that will be another approximately 750,000 to 1 million barrels a day.

And then one of the big ones that we really haven't done too much about is

our shale oil reserves. We have 2 trillion barrels of shale oil in this country, and if we were to produce that, we think within the next 5 to 10 years we could have almost 2 million, maybe 3 million barrels of production just from that. Then if you add the tar sands, you add coal-to-liquids—which there's a lot of bipartisan support on the floor on both sides of the aisle—our heavy oil reserves, and then our CO<sub>2</sub> recovery with CO<sub>2</sub> injection into depleted oil fields, if you add all of those up, that's 10 million barrels a day equivalent of production that we could have in the United States of America.

Unfortunately, for most of these on the red bar, our friends on the majority side, on the Democratic side, certainly the leadership—I'm not saying that everybody on their side—but the Democratic leadership are not only opposed, but some would say adamantly opposed. And that's what this debate is going to be about this evening.

So with that as the opening statement, I would be happy to yield to the distinguished chairman of the Natural Resources Committee, the Honorable NICK RAHALL of the great State of West Virginia.

Mr. RAHALL. Thank you, Mr. BARTON. I appreciate your yielding, and I certainly want to commend you and JASON ALTMIRE, the gentleman from Pennsylvania, for putting together this rather unique 2-hour debate, civilized debate, I might add, on our energy situation. It comes at a very appropriate time.

As we all know, President Bush just today by executive order lifted the moratorium that was put into place by his father some 18 years ago, I guess. That moratorium being on drilling in the Outer Continental Shelf and in ANWR. And by a stroke of the pen, the President has lifted that moratorium, and I assume now that those lands are open for leasing; and I think that's a very important point to stress that they are not under lease at this time but are open for leasing.

And as the gentleman from Texas, I'm sure, is aware, having a lease in hand is not quite the same as starting the process to obtain a lease. The latter being a rather lengthy process that can take quite a few number of years.

I would think at this time an appropriate quote would be that quote from the Energy Information Administration. When commenting on the efforts to lift the moratorium on OCS and ANWR, it stated that lifting the current moratorium, "would not have a significant impact on domestic crude oil and natural gas production or prices before 2030."

That's the year 2030, 22 years from now.

This is the Energy Information Administration, a part of Secretary Bodman's Department of Energy.

And I think it's also worthy of note that 79 percent of the oil and 82 percent of the natural gas in Federal waters off America's coasts are already available

for leasing. That is today, now; not 22 years from now.

So I think that old saying that a bird in the hand is better than two in the bush, well, an oil lease in hand is certainly—a lease, the actual lease in hand is certainly more preferable in terms of gaining production today in the near future; that is today, gaining production today, and bringing meaningful relief at the pump today, not 22 years from now, but today, would leave one to believe that opening these some 68 million acres of Federal onshore and OCS lands that are already under lease that can go—the companies can go out and drill on today—today, not 22 years from now, but today—would, I think, be preferable. And I'm not saying not including what the President has done today, that's fine. He has done what he did.

But also I don't see—and I'm asking the gentleman from Texas this question since it is his time—what is wrong with requiring the oil companies to use this acreage, 68 million, that are already under lease to go out and make some, at least a due diligent effort towards developing those leases?

Now, I recognize that's like a housing development. You're not going to find something on every acre that's under lease. You already know there's nothing under a few of those acres because when you build a housing development, you don't build a house on every inch of that entire development. So there are some acres where there's obviously not going to be anything there and not worth exploring.

But of that 68 million, there's only about 10 million now that is actively under production. And if you extrapolate out the same Energy Administration Department figures I just quoted, if you extrapolate out what is being produced from that 10 million acres, then you come up with roughly about a 14-year supply of natural gas by extrapolating out those figures.

So why can we not give some push to the industry to go out and make an effort to find out if there's anything in these 68 million acres or not? They will say, I'm sure there's not. But how do they know that there's not? How do we know what exists in the OCS that is now open by today's action of the President in lifting the moratorium? How do we know—I mean, the word “potential” is always used. The potential for this large find or this potential. But I just don't—I'm asking that question.

Mr. BARTON of Texas. If the gentleman would yield?

Mr. RAHALL. I believe it's your time.

Mr. BARTON of Texas. But this is a debate, and then I will yield to my good friend from Georgia.

First of all, I think those on the minority side would love to work with the distinguished chairman of the Natural Resources Committee if he wished to bring a bipartisan bill to the floor on permitting reform on the 68 million

acres that are currently available for leasing.

I think the gentleman knows that in the Energy Policy Act that passed in 2005, we put some permit reform measures in place on a pilot program basis. And in this Congress, there have been efforts made in H.R. 6 and then also some of the appropriation riders to put some roadblocks in some of those permitting process reforms. So if that's something that we could work together with, I would be happy to do that.

The second answer I would give on the acreage that is currently under lease is some of those areas, while they are leased, they don't appear to have significant mineral production even at today's prices. And as they asked the bank robber Clyde Barrow why he robbed banks, he anecdotally is supposed to have answered, “That's where the money is.”

Well, some of the areas that are currently not under lease is where we think the significant amounts of oil and gas are. But on the current acreage, I think we would be very willing to do an inventory bill, if the gentleman wished to work on an inventory bill. We could certainly do an expedited permit and reform bill if the gentleman and his leadership wished to do that. So there could be some agreement there.

Mr. RAHALL. Well, this gentleman is certainly no stranger to efforts to reform Federal onshore oil and gas leasing program. I've been involved in that for 20 years, I guess, through first my subcommittee chairman on what was then called the Interior Committee, I guess, and now certainly as chairman of the full Committee on Natural Resources. I'm not even adverse to reforming that process to make it more expeditious.

But I still haven't heard, and I'm still unclear, as to the fact that leasing is the more difficult portion of going out and drilling on these lands. Is that not accurate? Obtaining a lease, it seems to me, is a much more difficult—and you know, even before the land is available for leasing, for example, the land manager has to develop a plan to determine whether or not an area is appropriate for oil and gas drilling. Then once the Interior Department has made the land available to leasing, then the oil and gas companies need to secure the permits and do some preliminary exploration.

Mr. BARTON of Texas. But somewhere in there there's an option where you actually bid.

Mr. RAHALL. That was the next step I was getting to. They have to collect, analyze the data. Then the government has to put together an auction for the competitive bidding process and then award the leases.

Mr. BARTON of Texas. And then you have a specified amount of time in which to make improvements on the lease and determine whether it's commercial.

Mr. RAHALL. Okay. Now, the 68 million already has gone through that

process. The 68 million acres we keep referring to as use-it-or-lose-it, that has already gone through that process we both have described.

Mr. BARTON of Texas. My understanding is it's in—various acreages are in various stages of that process. I think that's a true statement. I don't think it's all completed the entire process.

Mr. RAHALL. In any case, years ahead of the lands made available today by lifting the moratorium.

Mr. BARTON of Texas. In some cases, that's a true statement. In some cases, it's not. There are areas that have been put under moratorium recently by acts of Congress that were closed to commercial production, especially in the eastern gulf of Mexico and the OCS.

Mr. RAHALL. But were they under lease?

Mr. BARTON of Texas. They were, is my understanding. And we then put them under moratorium.

Mr. RAHALL. Okay. I'm not clear on that whether they were.

Mr. BARTON of Texas. It's something we can certainly work together on.

Mr. RAHALL. Sure. Sure.

Anyway, the point I was trying to make is that it could take years and years to obtain a lease, which these lands opened up today are just starting on that process. The 68 million under our use-it-or-lose-it legislation has already gone through that process.

Mr. BARTON of Texas. Certainly the area that's never been leased is further behind that that has been in some stages of leasing. I will concede that point.

Mr. RAHALL. And in our use-it-or-lose-it legislation, we're simply saying current leases are generally 10 years. They vary somewhat depending on depth of water or where they're located. But generally, 10 years is the current leasing term. And if a company is holding that lease for 10 years and not producing on it or not even making an effort, showing some type of good faith, due diligent effort, as I'm sure the gentleman knows our Federal coal is required to do, other minerals on Federal lands that's owned by the taxpayers are required to do, we say in our use-it-or-lose-it, if that due diligent effort is not made, then you lose the lease and it's open again to competitive bidding. Another company can come in and make their bid for it.

Mr. BARTON of Texas. Again, we're very willing to work on some reforms to the current lands that are leased to expedite the permitting process and the leasing process, and hopefully those on your side would be willing to work with us to make available more lands that haven't yet been leased.

Mr. RAHALL. I think the major point I want to make is in our use-it-or-lose-it legislation, it's not an anti-drilling piece of legislation. It's a probe drilling.

Mr. BARTON of Texas. I'm not aware that we've ever said it was anti-drilling. What we've said is we want to do

more than that. But we certainly support the first steps at some pro-leasing program on the majority side. We think that's a step in the right direction.

Mr. RAHALL. I thank the gentleman.

Mr. BARTON of Texas. Let me yield to my good friend from Georgia (Mr. WESTMORELAND) who is responsible for, or at least partly responsible for the fact that we're actually having the debate. It was his idea, and he was able to convince Speaker PELOSI and minority leader BOEHNER to engage in this.

I will yield him such time as he may consume.

□ 2030

Mr. WESTMORELAND. I want to thank Mr. BARTON from Texas for doing that, and I will have to give Mr. ALTMIRE the credit for persuading Speaker PELOSI for allowing us to do that, and I want to thank the gentleman for his willingness that we can do this and have a good discussion.

And while we're doing this, I would like to ask Mr. RAHALL one question: Can you identify any lands which are leased and are not being developed and currently who is not developing lands that they had leased?

Mr. RAHALL. We have that on a map on where these lands are located. I'm not sure I have it here or not. But it has been made a part of the packet of information that our Committee on Natural Resources did send to all Members at one point, and now as far as naming a specific company, I can get that information. I don't have it readily on me, but it's a matter of the public record because, as the gentleman from Texas has already said, when they go through the competitive bidding process to obtain the leases on the 68 million, of course, that's public knowledge, and these are public lands.

Mr. WESTMORELAND. I guess I may not have posed my question just exactly right, but my question would be to you, this is a 10-year process. This is a 10-year process, and I'm assuming that each acre of land that has been leased, by whoever leased it, is in some part of this process of obtaining production or getting permits in order to produce. And my question is, do you know of any of the 68 million acres that are not in some process?

Mr. RAHALL. If they are, I cannot name a company that's not in any process at this point, but if they are in the process, that's due diligence.

Mr. WESTMORELAND. Okay.

Mr. RAHALL. Oh, I'm sorry. Here, leased land not producing is the red.

Mr. WESTMORELAND. I understand that they are not producing, but is there any—

Mr. RAHALL. Oh, you're saying they're moving toward production?

Mr. WESTMORELAND. Yes.

Mr. RAHALL. If they are moving toward production, that's due diligence; they maintain their lease.

Mr. WESTMORELAND. So I guess my question to the gentleman is that

this 68 million that we keep hearing use-it-or-lose-it is actually in some stage, and I have a chart here that shows the different processes.

Mr. BARTON of Texas. A very complicated chart.

Mr. WESTMORELAND. A very complicated chart, and I'm not going to attempt to explain it all, but I will say that the purple is the pre-leasing process. Your orange is the leasing process. The blue is the notice of staking process, and then the green is the application for permit to drill. And if you will notice these little red blotches on here, these are points of entry for people who want to start litigation during this process.

In 1992, the Democratic majority extended the leasing process from, I believe it was either 3 or 5 years to 10 years. And so I think a Democrat majority realized that this was a very burdensome process and could not be done in the time period that these oil companies have been given and extended it to 10 years.

So, you know, I just think that when we talk about 68 million acres, out of the 2.5 billion acres that are available that we could be drilling in, that it's not fair to say that, you know, use-it-or-lose-it, when the people that have leased it are somewhere on this chart trying to make this land that they have leased be productive for U.S. oil production.

Mr. RAHALL. Well, I would respond to the gentleman that, again, as I've said, if they are moving toward production, that's due diligence.

Mr. WESTMORELAND. I understand.

Mr. RAHALL. And our legislation would not take that lease away from them, and you're right about the 10 years.

Mr. WESTMORELAND. But I do think if you do say the 68 million acres out there, that they need to either use it or lose it, and the reality is that they're trying to use it. They're just in some part of this process, and you know, even if it's the Corps of Engineers, I know there're several sites where the Corps is actually being sued, and these companies have to wait on the Corps to work through their lawsuit before they can get back into the permitting process. And then there's other stumbling blocks that they have to go through.

But I just find it interesting that the Democrat majority in 1992 was the one that extended this to 10 years because they understand that the trouble and the amount of paperwork and filings and permitting process that you have to go through, and then the same party would come back and say, well, there's 68 million acres out there that they're not using and so, therefore, they need to lose it when they are actually within the law, within that 10-year period, and as far as I know, each and every one of them that have obtained the lease are in some part of this process.

Mr. RAHALL. Would the gentleman from Georgia not agree, however, that

while all of that is I'm sure accurate, that is still on these 68 million acres of land, and that's still I'm not going to say light years but many, many years ahead of where we are on the lands made available today by lifting the moratorium?

Mr. WESTMORELAND. I disagree with that because I feel that what the American people want us to do is to increase our oil production. I think that they want to see something like the gentleman from Texas talked about in 2005, that this government could come together and we could streamline. I mean, we've got enough smart people in our government that could streamline this process some to bring it about, and I know that the gentleman's in favor of that, and I look forward to working with you and Mr. BARTON to be able to streamline this so we can get production on the ground quicker.

Now, let me say that, you know, being from an agriculture State in Georgia, there's certain areas of the State that we grow apples. There's certain areas of the State that we grow cotton. There's areas of this country that produce more corn than other areas, and you wouldn't plant corn, let's say, in the north Georgia mountains because you wouldn't get near as good a yield as you would maybe in Nebraska or somewhere else.

At the same time, out of 2.5 billion acres of land, and knowing the area that's in the ANWR, and knowing the 2 trillion barrels of shale that are out West that we know are there, why wouldn't we open those up and give companies an opportunity to go out there? And it would not take 22 years to increase our oil production in some of these areas, and later on, we'll be showing a map of how much quicker I think we could get this oil into our refineries, which brings up another point, and then I will sit down because the gentleman from Texas has been so kind to yield.

But the other thing we need to talk about tonight I think is the increased refinery capability and the fact that, in our country, we've not built a refinery in 30 years. And we are right now importing almost 7 billion barrels of refined gas into this country and about the same amount of refined diesel. So, with that, I will sit down.

Mr. STUPAK. Would the gentleman from Texas yield on that point?

Mr. BARTON of Texas. I would be happy to yield to the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. STUPAK).

Mr. STUPAK. I thank the gentleman. I just want to make a couple of points. Mr. WESTMORELAND seems to indicate that if we would just increase drilling somehow, we would increase supply and everything would be wonderful. But as chairman of Oversight and Investigations, we saw articles earlier this year which indicated that refineries were cutting back on their production.

So myself and Mr. SHIMKUS from Illinois, the ranking member, we wrote to

the Energy Information Agency and asked them: What is our gas supply? Take a look at the first 3 months of 2008, compare it to previous years. Is it a supply-and-demand problem?

Now, it's not a Democratic issue or Republican issue. The Energy Information Agency puts forth these facts, and here's what they said.

Gasoline inventory actually peaked on March 7, 2008, of 22 million barrels more than March of 2007. Gasoline imports were higher than they've been in the last 5 years when we looked back. Gasoline demand in the U.S. is actually down eight-tenths of 1 percent. So you have more than adequate supply, the most we've ever had in this Nation's history, at 22 million barrels in March of 2007, more than what we're using, but yet the price has still skyrocketed.

Now, I think all of us, Democrats, Republicans, we're all willing to put more supply forward, trying to increase production, and in the 2005 Energy Policy Act, that Mr. BARTON led that Energy Policy Act, I was a conferee on, we streamlined a way for refineries to produce more if they wanted to.

But you see from the Energy Information Agency, the first 3 months of this year, there's more than adequate supply. When it comes to diesel, we actually exported 335,000 barrels out of this country to Western Europe and Latin America.

Mr. WESTMORELAND. You do realize that we changed the EPA or the clean air requirements for diesel. This diesel that we are exporting to Central American countries, our government will not let us burn in this country.

Mr. STUPAK. I think the gentleman misunderstood. The diesel is produced here in this country. We could have used it here in this country because home heating oil took off. Home heating oil took off for the east coast. We could have used it, but to keep that price, to artificially inflate the price of home heating oil, we exported 335,000 barrels: 93,000 to Western Europe and 182,000 barrels per day to Latin America.

So, I mean, we refined it, we produced it, we had it all right here. But what did we say? We can get a bigger buck overseas than to provide a service to the American people. That's what happened, according to the Energy Information Agency, not me, Energy Information Agency.

Mr. WESTMORELAND. Well, we need to get with those folks and see if we both can't get the same answer because the answer we're getting is these refineries are only set up to refine this diesel to a certain point, and because of the new standards implemented on diesel fuel for this country, that these fuels were exported to countries that can use that.

Mr. STUPAK. Let me keep saying, could you articulate these new diesel standards which made diesel not usable in this country? What are those new diesel standards?

Mr. WESTMORELAND. Well, there are new standards, of course.

Mr. BARTON of Texas. Low sulfur content. The sulfur content of diesel.

Mr. STUPAK. And when did those standards come in?

Mr. BARTON of Texas. They've been in place, and this is a guess, but about 18 months, 2 years. Don't hold me to that specifically.

Mr. STUPAK. So, well, when the Republican Party was in control then, in other words? There's nothing I can think of we did recently, and as the former chairman of the Energy and Commerce Committee knows, Mr. BARTON and I have done a lot of work on this issue in the last 3 years. That's why I was surprised when you're saying new diesel standards. I wasn't aware of any so it must have been something that came back a couple of years ago when you-all were in charge.

Mr. BARTON of Texas. I think they're being phased in, but they were put into place several years ago. Again, I'm not an expert on when they kicked in, but it's a very low sulfur diesel content. Now we have the cleanest diesel standards in the world.

Mr. STUPAK. I know Western Europe is very concerned about their diesel standards. In fact, they have the clean diesel, as we like to call it, here in Europe and that's why they rely more on diesel than gasoline. So when we export 92,000 barrels a day to Western Europe, obviously that diesel is meeting their standards, which are probably higher than ours. I'm making that assumption.

Mr. BARTON of Texas. Their standards allow more sulfur content than our standards do.

Mr. STUPAK. Very good. But the point being, on supply and demand, at least when we look back at least the first 3 months of this year, according to the Energy Information Agency, we had more than enough gasoline, we had more than enough diesel, and it was just that we had to get that price up so we exported it.

Mr. BARTON of Texas. You said that our inventory of finished gasoline peaked at 22 million barrels; is that correct?

Mr. STUPAK. More than the previous year, more than March 2007, that's correct.

Mr. BARTON of Texas. Again, I could be corrected, and if we were all on the Internet, somebody could blog in and tell us because there's somebody out there that knows exactly, but we use approximately 12 million barrels of oil equivalent today for transportation purposes, which would include gasoline and diesel and I think aviation fuel. So 22 million barrels is not quite 2 days' supply.

□ 2045

Mr. STUPAK. Sure.

Mr. BARTON of Texas. And that sounds like a huge number.

Mr. STUPAK. And when you take a look at it, what we expect our refin-

eries to do is refine enough for each day as we go along. And they did, and we had more than the previous 5 years ever. So if this supply crisis, as you seem to indicate there was, 5 years ago we should have seen it—4 years, 3 years, 2 years, 1 year. This is the most we've ever had, and they're claiming there's a supply problem?

Mr. BARTON of Texas. Well, if the gentleman would yield.

Mr. STUPAK. Sure.

Mr. BARTON of Texas. The gentleman has kind of outlined the problem, but I don't think he has really quite explained it.

As he pointed out, demand for gasoline in the United States is going down—you said eight-tenths of 1 percent, I accept that as a number. In terms of barrels a day, it's about a half a million barrels a day it's gone down.

Mr. STUPAK. Sure.

Mr. BARTON of Texas. The price of raw material product has gone up, as you well know, because of all of the hearings you've done on the Oversight Subcommittee that you chair so well.

Mr. STUPAK. Sure.

Mr. BARTON of Texas. So what you've done is put our refineries in a squeeze. The price they can get in the market is going down because demand is going down, and yet the price they have to pay for the raw material is going up. So that has really squeezed their margin. And because we've developed this almost-just-in-time refinery system in the United States—again, using your numbers, even though it's at a 5-year high, and I accept that as a good number—it's really only a two or three day supply.

Mr. STUPAK. Sure. And I thank the gentleman for his comments because he's absolutely right. The refineries are getting squeezed. In fact, some of the smaller refineries are actually refining diesel and gasoline at a loss because the base price of crude has skyrocketed. And as the gentleman is well aware because he has attended the hearings we've held jointly when you were Chair, and now as I'm the Chair of O&I, it's the excessive speculation. I know that's the second half of our comments here tonight, so I look forward—but the gentleman is right. And that's why so many of the refineries and the Members who represent the oil patch parts of our Nation have supported my legislation, the PUMP Act, Prevent the Unfair Manipulation of Prices, that take out the excess speculation which is causing the base product, crude oil, to just skyrocket.

So I thank the gentleman for his comments. He's right. I would agree with him. And later on we'll get to talk about speculation, and I look forward to the comments.

Mr. WESTMORELAND. Would the gentleman from Texas just yield for one minute?

Mr. BARTON of Texas. Sure. And then I want to yield to Dr. GINGREY of Georgia, but we'll yield to Mr. WESTMORELAND.

Mr. WESTMORELAND. I just want to point out to my friend that this cause is not, you know, the spike that we usually see is not some type of temporary disruption, but it's a demand from all over the world, not just this country, our demand has gone down some. It's not just this country. But if you look at China and Asia and India, their demand for this oil is going up every day. And if you look at where the world's supply of these imports that come into this country, if you look at Nigeria, Venezuela, Saudi Arabia, and then if you look at our ability and all the different types of untapped domestic resources that we have, we could get over and help ourselves by producing this.

And so, just like you said, it's not just the supply and demand, it's the fact that we have to import all of this when we have these untapped domestic resources at our hand right here for us to use. And I think that's the reason 73 percent of the American people are saying, hey, look, use some of this stuff.

And with that, I yield back.

Mr. BARTON of Texas. I yield to Dr. GINGREY—or I would be happy to yield to Mr. STUPAK for a brief comment if he wanted to make a comment.

Mr. STUPAK. I don't disagree with Mr. WESTMORELAND, what he had to say there. The only thing I would say is that's why we are saying we've got 68 million acres, let's drill or not.

You know, I come from northern Michigan; we have no oil, we have a lot of trees. And when you get a contract to cut timber on the Federal forest, you get your current year plus 5, if not, you lose that right. Because in order to grow our trees and have a prosperous forest, you've got to prune it out and we have to cut. Same thing with oil. If we want to access U.S. oil, why are they sitting on these leases when the leases have been approved for drilling and all the environmental standards have been met? And if supply is the problem, as you claim—and I'll grant you, that's part of it—then let's do it. No more excuses, let's drill.

You've got 22.8 million acres in Alaska that can be drilled on right now, but instead we seem to be focused on ANWR. I'm not even talking about ANWR, I'm talking about the Alaska Petroleum Reserve area, the Strategic Petroleum Reserve area, National Petroleum Reserve area. In Alaska, 22.8 million acres we could actually drill on right now today, permits are approved, everything is ready to go. Do it. Use it or lose it.

Mr. BARTON of Texas. With that, I would like to yield to the gentleman from Georgia, Dr. GINGREY.

Mr. GINGREY. I thank my colleague for yielding.

I just want to refer back to the statement the gentleman from Michigan just made in regard to the 22 million acres in Alaska that you could now drill on, yet our Democratic colleagues, our friends, are denying the

opportunity to drill on 2,000 acres—not 22 million—2,000 acres in the Arctic National Wildlife Reserve, and to obtain an equal amount, an equal amount of petroleum from that area without harming the environment. It makes no sense to destroy 22 million acres for the same amount of oil that you could get out of 2,000. But that's another subject, and I look forward as well to later in the hour, when the gentleman is going to talk about hedging and speculation and, in his opinion, what effect that has on the price of petroleum that we're paying.

The gentleman from West Virginia, the distinguished chairman of the Natural Resources Committee, was talking earlier in his opening comments about the fact that drilling on the Outer Continental Shelf, which we had been prohibited from doing—thank God the President lifted that Presidential moratorium, and now the only thing that is holding us back from going after those 20 billion barrels of petroleum and trillions of cubic feet of natural gas is inaction on the part of this Congress.

Now, earlier the discussion was about this use it or lose it. The gentleman from West Virginia talked about that a lot and said, well, you know, you've got these 68 million acres leased from the Bureau of Land Management—by the way, that's out of 750 million acres under the jurisdiction of the Bureau of Land Management. These oil companies, my colleagues, they pay for those leases, they're not free. And so they're kind of betting on the come, they're hoping that their geologists will then tell them that, yes, indeed, there is a certain amount of oil in that area of land that they have leased. And if it's true, then they're going to go after it. If there is no oil there or if there is an insufficient amount of oil there and it's not going to be productive to spend that kind of money for a little amount of oil, then maybe they will sit on those leases. And I would think that they would probably gladly yield it back to the Federal Government—especially if they got a refund on their money, they probably wouldn't.

But these same people that realize that right off the Outer Continental Shelf, whether it's the eastern seaboard or the Atlantic or the Pacific or the eastern part of the Gulf of Mexico where there are trillions of cubic feet of natural gas and billions of barrels of petroleum, that's the leases that they want, that's the leases that they need. And it just is beyond my comprehension to understand why the leader of this House, Speaker PELOSI, would say that is a nonstarter.

Now, we could stand here on the Republican side of the aisle and say to the gentleman from Michigan and others who are concerned about noncommercial speculators and what effect that might have on the price of a barrel of petroleum, we could say, well, you know, for us that's a nonstarter; or you're interfering with the free mar-

ket. Are you going to do the same thing with pork bellies and wheat and corn and all these other things that are traded on the commodities market and regulated by NYMEX? Are you going to force them offshore by overregulating and interfering with the natural flow of market? So, you know, we have concerns about that.

But I don't think that our side of the aisle has said, my colleagues, that that's a nonstarter, that we won't even discuss that. And yet your leadership, Ms. PELOSI, the majority leader of the Senate, Mr. REID, has said drilling on the Outer Continental Shelf, where we know there are trillions of cubic feet of natural gas and billions of barrels of oil, is a nonstarter. I think that's just totally wrong, that the American people don't want that. They want bipartisanship like we're having here tonight in this discussion, this colloquy between the two sides. And I think we can and should get together.

Mr. RAHALL. Would the gentleman yield?

Mr. GINGREY. I would be glad to yield to the distinguished gentleman.

Mr. RAHALL. I appreciate the gentleman from Georgia yielding.

You've mentioned ANWR and how much is available from that pristine environmental area. And again, I'm going to quote from that infamous Energy Information Administration of which I've quoted earlier.

First, this is a quote from President Bush June 9 of this year, "I've proposed to Congress that they open up ANWR, open up the Continental Shelf and give this country a chance to help us through this difficult period by finding more supplies of crude oil which will take the pressure off the price of gasoline. That was the President's statement on June 9. And his own Energy Information Administration predicts that the savings from drilling in ANWR would equal 1.8 cents per gallon in the year 2025. And that, coupled with what I said earlier—I think you were here—about the fact that these areas that the President has lifted the moratorium on today would not produce any major savings or even produce any oil until 22 years from now, it is not going to give us the relief we need.

And let's not kid ourselves. I think we all know in this body, both sides of this debate—or all sides of this debate I should say—that what we do in this body is not going to bring down the price tomorrow, next month, perhaps not next year. It takes not just increasing the supply side like you want to do, like we want to do in our "use it or lose it" legislation—that's a pro-drilling piece of legislation—but it has to be followed with follow-up efforts in developing all, renewable and alternative, fuels, which includes coal to liquid—

Mr. GINGREY. Well, reclaiming my time from the chairman—and I don't disagree with his last statement, it will certainly require a comprehensive approach; there is no doubt about that.



But the gentleman from West Virginia has said repeatedly tonight that opening up these reserves, whether it's the Arctic National Wildlife Reserve, where we estimate that 1.5 million barrels a day increased production, increased domestic production—I mentioned the numbers for the Outer Continental Shelf in regard to natural gas and petroleum, and your response, your statement earlier was that, well, if you did that tomorrow, if you started that tomorrow, it would be 2030—I think you used that date—before any production of oil would be seen, and therefore, that's not going to solve the problem. Yet your colleague from Michigan is going to tell us in a little while how important it is to rein in these non-commercial speculators because just the anticipation causes the price of oil to go up or down.

And what I want to say to my colleagues is that it might take 5 years, 10 years, possibly 15 years, depending on where you're going after the source. Certainly, mining shale out in the west, where we could get 1.5 trillion barrels of petroleum, may take a while. But just the fact that we're doing these things in a comprehensive way and we're increasing the domestic supply, I will almost guarantee you that overnight the price of a barrel of crude would drop by 20 percent.

Mr. RAHALL. Would the gentleman yield on that point?

Mr. GINGREY. I would be glad to yield.

Mr. BARTON of Texas. It's really time to let the Democrats have some time. I think it's the gentleman from New York's turn.

Mr. RAHALL. Just very quickly I would say to the gentleman from Georgia about causing the speculation to end and go the other way, all these efforts would help, I don't deny that, but I think the most immediate efforts, what the gentleman from New York is going to get into now, Mr. HALL, and that is releasing from the SPR. We have it, let's use it. This is an emergency. And I think that is going to show the speculators we're serious and that's going to stop the speculation.

Mr. BARTON of Texas. I yield to the gentleman from Michigan briefly and then the gentleman from New York.

Mr. STUPAK. Very briefly, I would just ask, whether it's ANWR or the National Petroleum Reserve in Alaska, would the other side, would the minority side agree and put into the legislation that all oil or gas discovered there or produced there would come strictly to the United States? Because what we see in ANWR and Prudhoe Bay, that oil goes around Laotian islands, it goes to Japan and China because it's actually closer and they get a higher price.

So will you say that the oil in Alaska will come for U.S. citizens to be used for American energy?

□ 2100

Mr. BARTON of Texas. Reclaiming my time, if the gentleman from Michi-

gan can get our distinguished Speaker to put an ANWR bill on the floor and let everybody have a free vote, I think I can guarantee you that we are willing to restrict that oil and gas to be used in the Continental United States or at least Canada and the United States and Mexico, at least in the North American Continent. If you can get us to get a vote on the drilling, I would bet we can get a restriction that meets your requirement.

Mr. RAHALL. I'd vote for that.

Mr. BARTON of Texas. We will be happy to take that deal.

And now, Mr. Speaker, I want to yield to the distinguished gentleman from New York (Mr. HALL).

Mr. HALL of New York. I thank the gentleman for yielding.

Just briefly, I trust that you would offer a motion to recommit to do just that.

Mr. BARTON of Texas. Let's get to that point, and we'll work. We'll talk.

Mr. HALL of New York. But I would just point out, going back a little bit, this map that I was holding up for Chairman RAHALL, the more interesting thing about this map, and I hope it shows up on the cameras, is that the purple sections here are all Federal land that may be leased and has not been offered to lease. Now, I suggest that the Department of Interior ought to take that—that's most of these areas. The red is the part that is actually producing. The yellow or orange is the part that has been leased but is not yet producing. But the purple, most of this lower 48 or western half of the lower 48 on this map, land available currently for leasing that has not been leased; so I would just urge that it be leased. No Democrats that I know are opposed to leasing, counter to whatever may have been implied out there.

I just want to mention that the one thing we can do that will have an immediate impact, and we're talking 5, 10, 15 years, maybe 20 years out before ANWR or OCS has an impact, depending on whom you listen to, but the one tool we have, that the President has, which was used by the first President Bush in 1991 and again by President Clinton in 2000, is the SPR, releasing oil from the SPR to increase supply. In 1991 it resulted in a price drop of \$8 per barrel, and in the year 2000, it brought down the price of oil by nearly 20 percent in a week. So I'm not saying it's the answer. I'm saying that it's a temporary thing and it's a tool that was given to the President by the Congress to deal with crises, which I believe were in one now, as our people are telling us.

All of us at home are hearing the same thing, I think, be it from parents driving their kids to school, commuters going to work, school systems that are barely able to afford to keep their school buses running, whatever it is, we need to provide immediate interim and long-term solutions. And one immediate thing that I think we should consider is releasing some amount of oil from the SPR.

Mr. BARTON of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I would like to yield to the distinguished doctor from Georgia, Dr. TOM PRICE.

Mr. PRICE of Georgia. I thank the gentleman for yielding.

And I want to thank all of my colleagues for working together to bring this evening to reality because I think it's what the American people want, and that is a discussion about what's going on.

Mr. Speaker, we have talked about the need for increasing supply, and I appreciate my friend from New York's saying that the SPR ought to be released because what that argument signifies is an appreciation that supply is important. And supply is important. And that's what the American people understand and appreciate. They know that when there's an increase in supply that there's a decrease in price.

We have talked about how much of the Outer Continental Shelf has been utilized, and different maps and different charts do different things and demonstrate different things. This is a pie chart that demonstrates that the dark purple area is the portion of the Outer Continental Shelf that is able to be leased. And 97 percent is not, 97 percent is not right now.

And that's what the American people see. They see that we have got all sorts of wonderful resources that we ought to be utilizing, American energy for Americans, that we're not. The same can be said for on-land areas that ought to be leased or could be available for leasing. Onshore, the dark purple, 6 percent is that area that is able to be leased right now for oil and gas development, and 94 percent is not. And I think that it's imperative that we concentrate on that area that could be utilized by Americans. Americans are frustrated because they understand and appreciate that we're not using the resources that we have.

My friend from Michigan talks about the fact that we have got more than enough supply. I would suggest to my friend that Americans don't believe we ought to be gaining 70 percent of our supply from foreign sources. I would suggest to my friend that Americans want to utilize American resources for Americans and that that's the kind of work that they would appreciate our doing together on this floor, as we're discussing tonight.

So I hope that as we move forward this evening and talk about these issues that we identify that available energy, the resources that we have that are available to Americans. We don't have to worry about Hugo Chavez. We don't have to worry about folks in the Middle East. We don't have to be held prisoner of folks that, frankly, don't like us very much. We can utilize American resources for Americans. And I hope that as we move forward in this discussion over the next couple of weeks that we'll concentrate on that and have that as the hallmark for our solutions.

And I thank my friend for yielding.

Mr. BARTON of Texas. I think my friends on the majority need more time. I would be happy to yield to my friend from Pennsylvania.

Mr. ALTMIRE. I thank the gentleman from Texas.

We're about to enter the transition, and I would just like to enter into a colloquy with the gentleman to clarify what subject matter those who are here—I see some new faces. Mr. BURTON from Indiana has come. We have Mr. MURPHY from Connecticut, who is going to speak next for us. Are we going to continue talking about the drilling issue and continue along this vein?

Mr. BARTON of Texas. I didn't know that we had a specific agenda, but certainly—

Mr. ALTMIRE. I just want to make sure the Members that are here get to talk about what they're here to talk about.

Mr. BARTON of Texas. It's going to be energy focused. You're about to control the time; so you will be able to set that agenda. But we're willing to talk about anything.

Mr. ALTMIRE. It's our intention to continue this discussion. If we're able to transition, we certainly want to get into the speculation issue with Mr. STUPAK and Mr. MURPHY. And then Mr. HALL, I know, wants to talk about the Strategic Petroleum Reserve.

Mr. BARTON of Texas. We are willing to talk about all those subjects.

Mr. ALTMIRE. For the next hour, that's generally what we have in mind.

Mr. WESTMORELAND. If I could use these last few minutes to kind of straighten out a few points, at least my opinion.

Mr. RAHALL mentioned that the "use it or lose it" legislation was pro-drilling. And I had the chart up, and I thought we were in complete agreement that the 68 million acres that are leased are in some process of permitting. So that is not a pro-drilling bill. If it was a pro-drilling bill, then what we have done would have been to reduce the regulations to allow this to speed up.

And let me say this. We have not exported any Alaskan oil in 8 years. And what this brings to highlight, and I hope the gentlemen from Michigan and Pennsylvania will take note of this and the fact that we have had so many conflicting facts here. This is a good reason that we need to have committee hearings, subcommittee hearings, committee hearings, and open debate on this floor. The energy bills that we have passed so far have come under suspension. So there have not been any committee hearings on it.

Speaker PELOSI said, "We are trying to get the job done around here." This is her defending the use of suspensions. "And we work very hard to build consensus, and when we get it, we like to just move forward with it, as we did on the Medicare bill," which was a suspension bill we don't even need to talk

about. But this is not about a tool; it's about the legislative process and how we get a job done.

We have seen tonight and, Mr. Speaker, I think the American people have seen tonight that there are so many conflicting reports that we need to have committee hearings. We need to go through regular process so we can debate these bills on the floor.

The last comment I will make, in 1995 President Clinton vetoed drilling in ANWR. By today's projections from Energy, they said that we would be getting 1 million barrels of oil a day today. That was 13 years ago. We would be getting 1 million barrels of oil. And quoting Senator SCHUMER, from the other side of the aisle, he said an additional 1 million barrels of oil a day produced in this country would lower gas 50 cents a gallon.

So the gentleman from Texas sees these things, that we need to go through regular order and let your Committee on Resources have some input.

#### ENERGY

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

Mr. ALTMIRE. I would ask the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. PRICE), is it your intention to continue the discussion that we are in right now, or are you waiting on a different subject?

Mr. PRICE of Georgia. No, I am pleased to continue the discussion on energy and whatever aspect of it you would like to discuss.

Mr. ALTMIRE. So, Mr. Speaker, here for the next hour, this is where we would like to lead this: We will continue talking about the domestic production issue; then we will transition into the issue of speculation in the market.

But at this point I will yield to my friend from Connecticut for continuing this discussion, and then we are going to start the transition. So for those of you on that side of the aisle who want to wrap up that discussion, please feel free to talk as long as you want about that. But it's our intention to then move into the market speculation issue.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Connecticut.

Mr. MURPHY of Connecticut. I thank my friend from Pennsylvania and our colleagues from the Republican side for getting together and engaging in what has probably been one of the more productive dialogues that we have had in at least my short time here in this House.

I guess I wanted to offer just a few brief comments as a means to pivot to this next conversation because I think that you see Democrats, the majority party, focusing so much of our time on the issue that Mr. HALL will talk

about, which is taking oil currently sitting right now available in the Strategic Petroleum Reserve and putting it immediately in supply on the market. I think you see us talking about what Mr. STUPAK will talk about, which is going after the very place in which the price of oil is actually set. As much as we talk about the oil companies and retailers, what it really comes down to is the price of a barrel of oil is set on a minute-by-minute, hourly basis on the commodities markets, the regulated/unregulated markets. I think you see us talking about those areas more than we talk about the subject that, quite honestly, occupies most of the time of our friends on the other side of the aisle because we see that as the means to immediate relief. I mean there is absolutely a conversation that should have occurred a long time ago and needs to occur right now to take this crisis that families are feeling and turn it into a long-term strategy both on the demand and supply side, changing the amount of supply and the very nature of the supply, changing the amount of the demand and the nature of the demand, to try to make sure that we don't get into this mess 5 years from now, 10 years from now.

But what we hear I know is what you hear. I mean this energy crunch doesn't discriminate based on the party you're registered with. Whether you're a Republican or a Democrat, you're paying the same prices in the Fifth District of Connecticut and Texas and in Georgia and all across the rest of this country. People are saying to us get us relief today.

So my estimation of why we have a disagreement at the very least on where the issue of drilling should fall on the priority list is because we just haven't seen the evidence yet that shows that this idea that drilling that will reach peak capacity in 20 years and may not start for another 6 or 10 years is going to actually lead to lower prices tomorrow or next week or the next month.

Now, Mr. RAHALL is right. We don't have all these tools at our disposal. We want prices to come down \$2 by sunrise tomorrow. It's not going to happen, and we don't have the ability in this Congress to make all of those big, broad, short-term changes. But what we are looking at is evidence that does not suggest that increased potential future supply is going to lead to lower prices today. I mean just look at what has happened over the last 6 years alone. We have seen a 361 percent increase in drilling permits. Now, there is no correspondence between that 361 percent increase in drilling permits and the price of oil.

Take a very specific example that we all read about just within the last 12 months and look and see how the futures markets responded to it. In November of last year, news came of potentially one of the most important oil field discoveries in the last decade, the Tupi field off the coast of Brazil. We