

earmarked by Members of Congress, because there will simply be no discipline on the process.

So I would urge the President to take the position that we shouldn't take money from the general fund, to veto this legislation when it comes, and I would urge the House as we prepare to reauthorize the highway bill just a year from now to take a different approach—to look at public-private partnerships and other methods—so we simply don't get in the position where we have thousands and thousands and thousands of earmarks that mean we have a bill that we can't fund and where we will again be robbing from the general fund to fund these projects.

HIGH ENERGY PRICES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. SHIMKUS) for 5 minutes.

Mr. SHIMKUS. Mr. Speaker, it's great to be back in the Chamber with the microphones on and with the lights fully ablaze and with our guests in the gallery and with cameras rolling.

For the past 5 weeks, I along with 135 of my Republican House colleagues have been on the floor, talking to our guests in the Chamber, talking about the number one issue facing America today, which is high energy prices. It was a very good exchange and a chance to not only talk about energy and where we're at and where we need to go in the future but also to visit with many of our guests here in Washington, D.C.

The major premises that we had when we left on the 1st of August are still true today. We have no comprehensive energy plan or policy. Even though gas prices might be stabilizing, they're stabilizing because the economy is going down. Eighty-four thousand jobs have been lost, all directly related to high energy costs. Think of it. In the aviation industry, in the transportation industry and in the automobile industry, those jobs have been lost because of high energy prices. So here is what we've been talking about over the past year.

Here is the problem. The problem is, when President Bush came into office, the price of a barrel of crude oil was \$23. Actually, when I came into office, it was \$10 a barrel. When the Democrats came in in January, it was at \$58. Today—and I update this daily—the price of a barrel of crude oil is \$104.13.

All we're trying to say here from our side of the aisle is this is not a good trend. This is not a direction in which we want to continue if we want to have a thriving economy, one that all of the people of our country can benefit from. I represent rural America. I represent 30 counties of southern Illinois, and it's really those in the rural communities who have to drive long distances to get to work, to get to school, to access health care; there's no public transportation; they're working in the fields; they drive big trucks. They're the ones

who are harmed, I think, exponentially greater than those in major metropolitan areas. So this is not a good trend.

So what is the solution? One solution is to bring on more supply. On this chart, we identify some of those supply options that we have in this country that we fail to access, and I had a bigger chart earlier. One that we hear a lot about is the Outer Continental Shelf. We only drill and explore in 15 percent of the Outer Continental Shelf, and we don't want to just up that to, maybe, 30 percent, which are some of the proposals coming from the other side of the aisle. We want to open up the entire Outer Continental Shelf. We want all of the above. We want to open up the eastern gulf. We want to open up the eastern seaboard of the Atlantic. We want to look at what's on our west coast. We want to make sure that there are billions of barrels of oil and the trillions of cubic feet of natural gas we can find and that we can access so we can help bring on more supply, U.S. supply. When we do this, this is U.S. energy and this is U.S. jobs, which is what this country needs.

Another resource that we have is coal. The United States has more coal reserves than any country on Earth today. In Illinois alone, we have 250 years worth of recoverable coal. We should access that for electricity. In Illinois, 70 percent of our electricity is by coal-fired power plants. Nationally, as a whole, 50 percent of all electricity is generated by coal. We can take coal and turn it into liquid fuel, thus competing with gasoline, thus competing with diesel fuel, thus competing with aviation fuel by having a new commodity product to compete with crude oil. We can move to solar and wind. That's part of the solution. That is more supply. We can look at renewable fuels like biodiesel and ethanol—ethanol from corn, ethanol from cellulosic feedstocks.

The big debate here is: What do you do with the Outer Continental Shelf? Here is a bigger chart. All of this red area is off limits by our design here in the House of Representatives. We have said annually for the past 30 years "no" to going after oil and gas in those areas. We are at a crisis time. This debate which will be on this floor is: Do we open up a little bit more or do we open up the whole thing? My position and that of the majority of people in my country is "all of the above."

THE AMERICAN ENERGY ACT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Florida (Mr. KELLER) for 5 minutes.

Mr. KELLER of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to address the problem of skyrocketing gas prices. When single moms in Orlando, Florida are paying \$80 to fill up their minivans, this is a crisis.

I spent my time in August touring the northern slope of Alaska to learn more about the oil drilling situation as

well as touring the Florida Solar Energy Center in Central Florida where they have the cutting-edge solar energy technology of tomorrow.

The straight talk is we need a comprehensive approach to address this energy crisis. We need more drilling here in America, in both Alaska and offshore. We need more renewable energy like wind and solar. We need more conservation like hybrids and higher fuel efficiency standards for our cars. We need all of the above. That is why I am proud to be the cosponsor of the American Energy Act. It's also why the American people deserve an up-or-down vote in this Congress on the American Energy Act.

Now, those who say "no" to drilling completely ignore the facts. The main component of a price of gasoline is crude oil. Crude oil is a commodity governed by the law of supply and demand. Therefore, we must increase our supply of crude oil and reduce our demand. Well, where is the largest untapped source of crude oil in America? It's in Alaska, in a place called ANWR.

The critics say three things: Don't let us drill in ANWR because it's only a trivial amount of oil. It will ruin the pristine wilderness, and it will hurt the wildlife in that area, particularly the caribou and the polar bears. I went there on a factfinding mission to find out the answers to those questions myself. Let's address each one.

Is it a trivial amount of oil? I learned from our independent experts and employees of the U.S. Department of the Interior that there are 10.4 billion barrels of crude oil under the lands in ANWR. 10.4 billion barrels of oil are enough to provide all of my home State of Florida with its energy needs for 29 years. 10.4 billion barrels of oil are enough to pump 1 million barrels of oil a day every single day for the next 30 years. Does that sound like a trivial amount of oil to you?

The next thing I heard is it will ruin the pristine wilderness area. Well, I stood right here in the only village in ANWR called Kaktovik, and I looked south from the Arctic Ocean, and I didn't see any trees. It's a flat, frozen, barren tundra. It's 30 degrees in the middle of August, and it's 30 below in the winter. I sat there with the head leader from the Eskimo tribe, Mr. Fenton Rexford, and I said, "Where are the trees?" He says, "Well, Congressman, there's not a tree within 100 miles of where the drilling would take place." So much for the pristine wilderness we hear about.

The next thing we hear is that we'll hurt wildlife. I learned from our fish and wildlife experts that, in reality, there are over 5,000 polar bears in Alaska and 800,000 caribou, and their numbers have increased every year for the past 30 years. In fact, in the current largest oil field in America, Prudhoe Bay, they started drilling in the mid-1970s. At the time, there were 3,000 caribou there. Now caribou have increased tenfold in Prudhoe Bay, and there are

over 30,000 caribou there. I saw them peacefully coexisting.

So, when you take away their real arguments and you see it firsthand that you can drill for oil and that you can do it in an environmentally friendly manner, what is the bottom line for why some of these environmental extremists don't want us to drill? Well, we don't have to guess. This is what the president of the Sierra Club says. His name is Carl Pope, executive director of the Sierra Club: "We are better off without cheap gas." They don't want gas prices to go down.

Tell the single mom in Orlando who just paid 80 bucks to fill up her minivan that she is better off without cheap gas. Tell the thousands of airline employees who just lost their jobs because of skyrocketing fuel that they're better off without cheap gas. Tell the people in Orlando, Florida who are losing their jobs in the tourism industry because tourism is down that they're better off without cheap gas. Tell the small businessman who has just had to lay off his employees because he can't make the payroll anymore because of gasoline prices that he's better off without cheap gas. Tell the school districts that are having to go to 4-day-a-week school because they can't afford the gas for their buses that they're better off without cheap gas.

Let's bring some sanity back into this program. Let's have a vote, up or down, on the American Energy Act. Let's have it right now, this month, before we adjourn.

FREE TRADE AGREEMENTS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. WELLER) for 5 minutes.

Mr. WELLER of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to ask the question: Why is the House of Representatives withdrawing from trade? Why is the House of Representatives drawing away from our need to export products to good markets?

The economic statistics speak volumes. This past week, we saw 3.3 percent economic growth for the last quarter. We'd all like to see it better, but what was interesting was that, of that 3.3 percent economic growth, almost all of it, in fact 3.1 percent economic growth, resulted from trade and from exports. So the good news in the economy today is that we're expanding our exports, and if we did not have the opportunity to export products, our economy would really be in bad shape because it's the export market that's keeping this economy moving forward with manufactured goods, agricultural goods, services, and other products.

Today, we are fortunate to have 16 bilateral agreements with other nations, many in our own hemisphere in the Americas, and we're fortunate to enjoy a trade surplus with all of them. We voted on these trade agreements in the House. Those who opposed them said, you know, if we have trade agree-

ments, we always lose. Well, the interesting thing is, with the Dominican Republic-Central America Free Trade Agreement and with the Chilean Free Trade Agreement, we've seen the results. American farmers, American manufacturers and American workers are winning because we have a trade surplus with those countries today. In fact, we had a trade deficit with Central America before DR-CAFTA, and today, we have a trade surplus. So trade agreements win.

That's why I was so concerned when a spokesman for the Speaker of the House explained her refusal to schedule a vote on the Colombian trade agreement: You know, the economy is bad and trade agreements are bad for America. We can't have a vote on a trade agreement, because somehow that hurts us.

All you have to do is look at the facts, and you'll see that trade and exports are good for America. My State and the district that I represent in Illinois are trade dependent. We depend on exports to create jobs as does the rest of America whether it's union workers who make Caterpillar bulldozers in Joliet or in Decatur or in Peoria or whether it's farmers in Bureau County who are growing corn or soybeans. We depend on our exports, on the export market, to create jobs and to raise our incomes. Frankly, it's the export market today that's the engine of economic growth. We have before this House a good trade agreement. It's the U.S.-Colombia trade agreement. "Trade promotion agreement" is the technical term.

Colombia is not only the oldest democracy in Latin America; it is also the second largest Spanish-speaking country, a market of 42 million consumers. It's a country that has made tremendous progress. In fact, our ally Colombia, which is a democracy, has a very popular president. President Uribe is the most popular elected president in all of the Americas. He has an over 80 percent approval rating. Compare that with the United States House of Representatives, which, I think, has a 16 percent approval rating from our own citizens. Clearly, he has made progress. He inherited a civil war. He has made progress in reducing violence. He is bringing those who committed atrocities during the civil war, on both the left and the right, to trial to be held accountable. He is going after the narco-traffickers who have jeopardized the security of that country.

It's interesting to know that 71 percent of Colombians today say they feel more secure under President Uribe while 73 percent say Uribe respects human rights. Homicides are down 40 percent. Kidnapping are down 76 percent. In fact, the murder rate in Colombia is the lowest in 15 years, and it's actually lower than that of Washington, D.C.'s. So, if you're a citizen of Colombia, you're safer than a tourist or a citizen who is walking the streets of Washington, D.C. when it comes to being a victim of violence.

The bottom line is the U.S.-Colombia trade agreement is good for America. There are those who always oppose trade, and they always have an excuse. They say, you know, in the history of Colombia, there has been some violence, and everyone acknowledges that. President Uribe and his government have made tremendous progress. Then they say, well, there has been violence against labor leaders. Yes, there has been. President Uribe and everyone involved acknowledge that, but they've made tremendous progress. The bottom line is, under President Uribe, Colombia is a safer and better place.

Colombia deserves a vote. We need to bring the U.S.-Colombia trade agreement to this floor and to vote on it up or down. I believe it will pass with a bipartisan majority, and American workers will be the winners.

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 12(a) of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess until noon today.

Accordingly (at 11 o'clock and 13 minutes a.m.), the House stood in recess until noon.

□ 1200

AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. CAPUANO) at noon.

PRAYER

The Most Reverend James A. Tamayo, Bishop of the Diocese of Laredo, Texas, offered the following prayer:

Heavenly Father, in Your wisdom, You created man and woman and called us to be stewards of Your creation. As this new day begins for the Congress of the United States, we invoke Your presence in our deliberations and activities.

We represent communities from diverse parts of this great Nation. Although we travel to our Nation's Capitol from different directions, as U.S. legislators, let us be steadfast in our solidarity to seek the common path that leads to the betterment of all people in our Nation.

Noble and valiant men and women of different cultures and ethnic heritages contributed to the establishment of democracy in the United States of America. Strengthen our resolve to do good. We accept the challenge to listen to one another, to support one another, and to respond generously to those most in need.

This we pray in Your Holy Name. Amen.

THE JOURNAL

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair has examined the Journal of the