

the answer is zero. Zero current production from these leases should be a substantial cause for concern. It illustrates a basic problem with our domestic production of oil and gas. It is not that we have not leased Federal land for exploration and production. We have leased large tracts of Federal land. We are leasing more all the time.

Oil and gas companies certainly benefit by having these leases on their books and claiming the potential oil as part of their reserves. But we need to get these oil and gas resources out of the reserves column and into the production column.

What does the Republican leader's amendment do about any of this? Absolutely nothing. He is calling for more leases in areas that are much more remote from oil and gas transmission infrastructure than the acreage we have already leased.

It would take a decade or more for those resources to come into production at the very best. Why should we expect oil and gas companies to rush into new areas to begin production when they are sitting on literally millions and millions of acres of existing leases without doing any production on those?

The fact is, having a lease sale in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge will not do a single thing to bring down gasoline prices anytime soon. Opening offshore areas such as off the east coast and off the west coast, where there is no infrastructure, is also a very ineffective response to the prices that consumers are seeing today. These are not real solutions to what is wrong in energy markets today.

If we are serious about doing something to boost domestic production, we need to focus on better management of Federal leases. Let me describe two concrete suggestions in that regard.

First, we might consider imposing a production incentive fee on all the Federal acres that are under lease, a fee that would increase over time but which would be cancelled by royalty payments. That would provide a disincentive for sitting on leases for purposes of inflating a company's reserve estimates.

Second, we enacted some specific provisions in the Energy Policy Act of 2005 that reduced pressure on the leaseholders in the National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska, in terms of their responsibilities to develop the oil resources there. We changed the law to allow oil companies with a lease in the National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska to hold it for 30 years or more, without producing.

I opposed those changes to the law but was unable to prevail on that point. Provisions that allow for decades of additional delay in developing oil on Federal lands that are dedicated for production of oil make no sense when that oil is selling at \$126 a barrel.

If anyone in this Chamber wants to advocate for oil production in Alaska or anywhere on Federal land, then the

threshold test is whether they are willing to change the incentive structure that currently rewards delay and inaction. That dysfunctional incentive structure was put in place in the law we passed in 2005.

If we are not willing to take action to bring the 3.8 million acres already leased in Alaska into production, then there isn't much credibility to the argument that somehow one more lease sale up there will greatly add to energy security.

There is another area in which the Republican leader's amendment misses the mark on promoting domestic oil and gas production. His amendment leaves out the one place offshore where it would be easiest and fastest to get additional production, and that is in the Gulf of Mexico. His amendment opens the entire Atlantic and Pacific coastlines for new oil and gas production but leaves in place the oil and gas moratoria in the Gulf of Mexico. That is out of touch with reality. The Gulf of Mexico is the first place we should be looking to for expanded production, not the one place we should leave off the list.

Let me put up this chart. When we last debated offshore oil and gas production in this Chamber in 2006, we made what I consider to be a very bad bargain. We put off limits—that is the yellow area on the chart—10 times the amount of natural gas that we opened to exploration and drilling. We made available for lease 2 trillion cubic feet of natural gas in the Gulf of Mexico while putting off limits 22 trillion cubic feet of natural gas. We also put new areas of the Gulf of Mexico under moratorium for the first time, including portions of the lease sale 181 area that were closest to the existing oil and gas infrastructure. The area now under current law is off limits until 2022 because of that provision we passed into law in 2006. The portion of the lease sale 181 area we put under moratorium for the first time contains a half billion barrels of oil and 4 trillion cubic feet of natural gas.

The available infrastructure to take it to market is already there. The interest by industry in these resources is intense.

This weekend I was reading the current edition of Barron's, the Dow-Jones business and financial weekly. There is a column in there by Jim McTague where he quotes President Bush's former economic adviser, Al Hubbard, as saying:

If the other 49 states realized what Florida is doing to them, they'd be up in arms.

McTague goes on to lament the fact that President Bush does not support revoking the lease sale moratoria on the outer continental shelf that were first imposed by his father in the early 1990s.

He then states:

Bush, during the 2000 presidential contest, promised his brother Jeb, Florida's governor at the time, that he'd maintain the drilling ban.

So there you have it. If we are really serious about increasing domestic production and repealing existing moratoria, the place to start is here in the gulf. The Republican leader's amendment leaves that out, much to its detriment.

I have additional comments that I do not have time to go through. There is one area where I very much compliment the minority leader, and that is including in his amendment the proposal to suspend the filling of the Strategic Petroleum Reserve for the remainder of this year. Senator DORGAN has been pushing this legislation for many months. I have been glad to be a cosponsor. I know Senator DOMENICI recently indicated he now supports this position. This is a proposal that is in Majority Leader REID's proposal. It is proposed legislation. It is also in the Republican leader's amendment. I congratulate him for that.

Right after we vote on the Republican leader's amendment, the large comprehensive amendment I have been talking about, the vote right after that will be on the proposal to suspend the filling of the Strategic Petroleum Reserve.

I hope will get a strong bipartisan vote. Clearly, it would be a step in the right direction. It is something we should do. I hope we can at least include that positive action before the Congress has to turn to other business tomorrow as it plans to, when we get back to discussing the flood insurance.

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Colorado.

Mr. ALLARD. Mr. President, I understand the minority leader is on his way to make a few remarks. In the meantime, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. McCONNELL. I ask unanimous consent that the order for quorum call be rescinded.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

HUMANITARIAN CRISIS IN BURMA

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I would like to address the heart-breaking humanitarian crisis in Burma and the actions of the military junta there which have shocked our consciences over these last days.

A government that was swift to mobilize last year against a peaceful protest by unarmed monks has astonished us with its sluggish response to the devastating May 3 storm.

With thousands dead and perhaps 2 million now at risk of further suffering, the military junta has treated the cyclone as more of a political inconvenience than a national tragedy, focusing on a sham constitutional referendum instead of relief efforts. And

the consequences of this callous response are tragic. As precious time was wasted, what was already a terrible natural disaster became a manmade disaster of spreading hunger and disease. We have heard reports of aid workers being turned away and of visas for aid workers being refused on the grounds that consulates were closed for the weekend.

Today, finally, an American C-130 was permitted into Burma carrying desperately needed supplies. Two more flights are expected tomorrow. This is a positive development, but it is also an extremely modest concession.

It is my hope that these halting steps by the regime in the last day or so augur a greater openness to humanitarian assistance.

The people of Burma should know that, if permitted, America stands ready to help.

PEACE OFFICERS MEMORIAL DAY AND POLICE WEEK

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, all across the country this week, Americans will honor the law enforcement officers who keep our Nation safe and paying solemn tribute to those who have lost their lives in the line of duty. Peace Officers' Memorial Day and Police Week is a time to thank all those who keep us safe, and a time to be grateful for all who have served.

As the Jefferson County Judge Executive in Louisville, KY, I had a strong relationship with the local police force. I was always proud of the department and its leadership and the rank and file officers who worked hard to protect and defend Louisville. I remember the pride we felt when we brought county and city police together to create the Crimes Against Children Unit, and the pride the officers felt when they made it a model for the rest of the country.

Louisville has changed a lot since then, and so has America. On September 11 we awoke to an enemy that has no regard for human life and that has repeatedly expressed its intent to destroy our Nation. We have seen the horror these people can inflict on our cities. And we take them at their word when they say that they plan to do it again. It is because of this threat that today we have an even deeper appreciation for the men and women who enforce our laws, not just as first responders to crime, but as a first line of defense against potential terrorist attacks.

During this Peace Officers' Memorial Day and Police Week, we honor the contributions of our police officers and other keepers of the peace. We remember the sacrifice of those who have fallen in the line of duty, including Officer Jacob Chestnut and Detective John Gibson, who gave their lives right here in the Capitol ten years ago. It was July 24, 1998 when they, as it now says on the plaque commemorating their heroism, "bravely gave their lives defending the United States Capitol."

We express our gratitude to the families of America's peace officers and police, who make sacrifices large and small so their loved ones can keep the rest of us safe.

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Colorado.

ENERGY PRICES

Mr. ALLARD. Mr. President, I come to the floor again to talk about energy prices. Each week we must finally be at the tipping point where Democrats are at least willing to address high energy prices. Unfortunately, although energy prices remain at an all-time high, it seems we are not there yet. The average American uses 500 gallons of gasoline every year, with the average gas price at \$3.61 per gallon. That means the average American will spend more than \$1,800 this year on gasoline. That is almost \$300 more than they would have spent a year ago. But let's look at a slightly longer period. Let's look at the period since Democrats took control of the Congress and insisted that they had all the answers.

On January 4, 2007, a gallon of gas cost \$2.33. That means the average American has spent \$960 more on gasoline in the year and a half since Democrats took over. The question is, Why are we not producing the domestic oil available in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge known as ANWR? The U.S. Geological Survey estimates that the potential oil in ANWR would exceed that which is currently being produced in the lower 48 States. We hear a lot of moaning about how we should not open ANWR because that oil would not be available for 10 years. But I remember hearing that exact same argument about 10 years ago. If we had opened ANWR to domestic oil production 10 years ago, we would be less reliant on foreign sources for about 1 million fewer barrels each and every day.

The question is, Why are we not producing in the Outer Continental Shelf? Currently, 58 percent of this area is off limits to production. The National Petroleum Council estimates if congressional restrictions were lifted, we would have access to more than 300 trillion cubic feet of natural gas. This is enough gas to meet all of the current U.S. needs for more than 13 years. Current levels of production in the Outer Continental Shelf employ over 45,000 people. To those of us concerned about employment figures, opening additional areas offshore will lead to more jobs in addition to increased domestic energy.

The question is, Why are we not producing domestic oil from oil shale in Colorado, for example? The Democrats ensured that BLM could not write commercialization regulations by placing a spending prohibition in the fiscal year 2008 omnibus bill which is being applied this year from last year's action. Commercialization regulations do not authorize production or even lease. These

regulations simply allow the department to set out the rules of the road for companies so they can make investment decisions—matters such as the length and requirements for oil shale leases, the royalty rate, and reclamation requirements that would be set by commercialization regulations.

Considering there is well over 1 trillion barrels of oil locked in the shale beneath Colorado, Utah, and Wyoming, this is not an inconsequential amount of energy. One trillion barrels of oil would provide for the current consumption levels of 20 million barrels a day for over 136 years. If the numbers seem staggering, that is because they are. The question is, Why are we not addressing the restrictive policies on the construction of new refineries that have led to no new refinery capacity in this country since the 1970s?

We must encourage companies to build new refineries so not only can we produce more oil domestically, but we can refine it into a usable product as well.

The law of supply and demand tells us with high demand and low supply, prices will increase. This seems to have escaped the notice of the Democrat-controlled Congress, however. Oblivious to prices at the pump, this Congress is failing in its duty to the American public.

Each attempt to implement commonsense solutions to current energy problems is met with loud and vehement objections. At this point, these objections can only mean Democrats want energy prices to continue to increase. I can think of no other explanation.

The facts are rather simple. The Congress has blocked efforts to produce trillions of cubic feet of natural gas, trillions of barrels of oil, and prevent the construction of new refineries, nuclear powerplants, and hydroelectric facilities.

The longer we deny access to domestic supplies, the more our current energy shortages will climb. And the less energy we produce domestically, the more we will rely on foreign—and possibly hostile—sources for it.

It is time—it is time—for Congress to step to the plate and ensure this country remains one of the safest and most prosperous nations on Earth. That means increasing domestic energy production and decreasing our dangerous reliance on foreign energy sources.

We will vote in a very short time on whether to increase domestic energy production or whether to maintain the status quo. I can only hope each of us does the right thing and votes in favor of the McConnell amendment to stop the status quo and to ensure we can produce more of the energy we need right here at home.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Michigan.

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, have I been assigned a specific amount of time?

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator has been assigned 20 minutes.