

IDAHOANS SPEAK OUT ON HIGH ENERGY PRICES

Mr. CRAPO. Mr. President, earlier this week, I asked Idahoans to share with me how high energy prices are affecting their lives, and they responded by the hundreds. The stories, now numbering over 1,000, are heartbreaking and touching. To respect their efforts, I am submitting every e-mail sent to me through energy-prices@crapo.senate.gov to the RECORD. This is not an issue that will be easily resolved, but it is one that deserves immediate and serious attention, and Idahoans deserve to be heard. Their stories not only detail their struggles to meet everyday expenses, but also have suggestions and recommendations as to what Congress can do now to tackle this problem and find solutions that last beyond today. I ask unanimous consent to have printed in the RECORD today's letters.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

Let us see if our representatives truly represent us or not. Or are they giving in to the environmental lobbyists? I believe the question of drilling here at home for oil and natural gas should be put on a nationwide ballot and then Congress should push forward with the outcome of that result. Are we really living in a democracy or not? I believe the majority of Americans approve of drilling here for oil and natural gas. If our representatives truly represented us, that would have been happening by now.

STEVEN.

DEAR SENATOR CRAPO: The only way to stop the rise in oil prices is to start drilling in our own country. The special interest environmental groups run Congress to the detriment of the American people and the economy.

We can't drill off the coast of Florida, but the Chinese can; and everybody knows how careful the Chinese are when it comes to the environment. We have huge supplies of natural gas and oil right here in our own country but a few so-called environmental whack jobs are being allowed to destroy our economy and our country.

Sincerely,

GEORGE.

I do not have an energy story. I simply want to thank Mr. Crapo and ALL of the folks that help him in the everyday part of the legislature business.

Sincerely,

PEGGY, Meridian.

DEAR MR. CRAPO, I am a resident of Coeur d'Alene, Idaho; taxpayer and voter. Can you please explain to me why the Republican Congress did nothing to confront this issue 4 years ago when they controlled all three branches of the government? You knew then that there was an energy crisis and that it would get worse, yet no proactive legislation was passed to confront the issue or to increase production. . . . why?

Unsigned.

Hello Senator and thanks for your efforts. You asked that I share my story on how the high gas prices have affected my life. I am sure my story is not nearly as poor as some may be. I am thankful to have a stay-at-home eBay job. However, even I wonder how others do it when once a week I pay \$50 to-

wards a gas tank full to operate my car and I do not even hardly go anywhere! I used to pay this much all month, now I pay it once a week. My wages are not going up. I have an energy-efficient mini-van.

It has mostly affected my family, however, because my 5 children, 7 years and younger, can no longer feel free to visit their dying grandmother and grandfather, just 3.5 hours away. It used to cost just \$20 in gas for a visit there and back, not a big deal. Now it costs \$60. Instead of doing this a couple times a month for \$30-40, I can now only do it once every 1.5-2 months for \$60. Grandma and Grandpa do not come visit us anymore but maybe once every 6 months. They used to come once a month. Our fun outings into the country for enjoyment and to get away from the hectic busy pace of our lives. They simply do not happen anymore. I take the stroller down the bike path. Boring and depressing.

It is depressing to see such price gouging and why? Is it because of the war? Cannot the government regulate price gougers in such a time of war and economic depression with the housing slump and all? It would be nice to see someone step up to bat. Other families who drive to work every day feel it the most. It makes for all our friends to have sad moods.

Thanks for your time.

MARIANNE.

My family and I are low middle income and, with the price of fuel/groceries, we have had to choose our fuel to get to work or food. Both my husband and I have been eating less to ensure that our children are well fed, among other cuts in our life. I am extremely worried that if it continues we just won't be able to pay our bills too. We need to be utilizing our own resources within our country! Thanks, Jennifer

This makes good sense to consider for all our "Political Leaders" [to watch this video] . . . let's get something positive going. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZPch2k63uj4>

DAN, Post Falls.

I watched part of a program on PBS where communities are pooling together and buying wind mills to power their towns, and the people in the communities profited from the projects through little or no cost for power. Why can't we get something started like that in Idaho? If for no other reason, it would give the wind a reason to stop blowing.

We could invest the city/county/tax money in wind farm projects—use money to make and save money for the communities. If we could keep the shyster politicians away from the cash.

Another energy idea would be to allow the carburetors for automobiles to be revised for better gas mileage. That would be a very simple solution. If an 80,000 pound semi and trailer can get 8 miles per gallon, a car should be able to get at least 100. That would substantially reduce the amount of fuel consumed.

KATHY, Twin Falls.

DEAR SENATOR CRAPO, I am the Executive Director of the Eastern Idaho Community Action Partnership in Idaho Falls which serves 9 eastern Idaho counties. One of our programs is the LIHEAP program which provides one time help with energy bills. The program concluded at the end of March. There is a component of LIHEAP called LIHEAP Crisis that provides limited help outside of the normal Energy Assistance schedule. Since the end of March, we have received requests for help from families we have never seen before. Families must meet

the same income criterion that is required for the standard LIHEAP program. What this tells us is that families have been able to make due until now, but because of high fuel costs and higher grocery prices, they are now not able to meet all of their obligations. We are also seeing more requests for food boxes than in previous years.

I hope this is helpful for you.

RUSS, Idaho Falls.

I sell heavy equipment and these fuel prices are doing more than pinching family budgets, although they are doing that too. Almost every day I have a contractor tell of a job that got put on hold or cancelled due to the high price of moving dirt. Most of the increase in excavating prices is directly related to diesel. These fuel prices are putting people out of work.

What can we do to get Congress off their butts and start drilling oil wells and refining it?

Why are we wasting natural gas making electricity, instead of promoting nuclear and hydro?

Why are we not pushing diesel? It is cleaner and far more efficient than gasoline.

BRENT, Rigby.

MR. CRAPO, thanks for your email update on the failure of congress to act concerning higher energy prices. You are all pandering to the environmental wackos. I'm ticked that the Chinese can drill for oil just off our coast lines but we cannot. We need congress to allow oil companies to drill on federal land, especially up in Alaska. We have plenty of our own oil, let's use it and quit depending so much on foreign sources! Yes conservation is good, but we really need increased domestic supply to drive down costs. And we need lower costs NOW before our economy is run into the ground. I can't even afford to fly out of Twin Falls right now because airlines are raising their prices so high, so I have to drive to Boise to catch lower cost flights; I fly a lot for business purposes. But then I have to pay much more in gas to drive from Twin to Boise, so I really do not save all that much . . . but every little bit helps. My vote this Fall, and from here on out will be for whoever will work the hardest on this issue of increasing domestic supply of oil.

RON, KIMBERLY.

MR. CRAPO, I am responding to your request for some more individual perspective on the brunt of the energy crisis. With the cost of gasoline up 40% it directly impacts my pocketbook, not just in driving costs, but everything that I do. The cost of electricity, the cost of food, shipping, everything has gone up. As a small business owner, and employer here in the state of Idaho, it significantly affects me, and my employees. We need to take every step we can to make our country energy independent, relying on people that hate us, and our way of life, for energy is suicide. If it takes opening up areas for exploration of oil, and natural gas I'm for it! Give oil companies incentives and tax breaks for finding, and refining more product. Stop the stranglehold these out of touch clowns have on our nation! Make us once more the strongest nation in the world! We do not need to be the strongest by subjugating other nations, just by being the only nation that can stand on its own!

Thank you for your time,

DANIEL, Boise.

DEAR SENATOR CRAPO: You asked how the energy crisis is affecting me personally. My truck is a 1994 Chevy with 140 thousand miles on it. I was going to buy a new one to replace it. Since the increase in costs for gas and diesel, I can not afford it now so I will just

continue to repair what I have and drive it less. So this discussion affects many businesses in my area.

(1) I will not be spending money at the dealers to buy it.

(2) I will not be spending interest at my credit union for the loan.

(3) I will not be spending money at the insurance company for the added insurance.

(4) I will not be spending money at the parts houses for improved add-ons to the vehicle (tinted windows, bed liner, etc).

(5) I am not going to be taking a driving vacation this year, cost too much.

(6) I do not think I'll be going on an airplane either cost for tickets is increasing.

(7) I want to go over to Europe, Italy this year because I have never been there, but now the cost Euro cost is 1.5 times greater so that will not happen.

Think of the places in the U.S. you have to spend money to get there. Congress does not realize that this is getting worse every day, a recession is already here and if it continues it will be a depression. The oil is not going to go down. The World can only make 85 million barrels per day. The World wants 86.5 million barrels per day. The world is now out bidding the U.S. for oil supplies. The U.S. has to pay the price to buy oil for what the world market sets it at. (Econ 101—supply vs. demand). The U.S. makes 5 million barrels per day—the U.S. uses 21 million barrels per day so we need 16 million barrels per day for imports. These are facts FACTS—does congress get these FACTS!!!! We either get more of our own oil or we continue to pay and pay even more. Please tell them over and over again, THIS PROBLEM IS NOT GOING TO GO AWAY IT WILL ONLY GET WORSE! Please tell your democratic friends to do something and not put their head in the sand.

Thanks for asking.

JOHN, Boise.

I am a young mother in Meridian, Idaho. I am one of those few who can honestly say that I LOVE my in-laws. We love to be together as a family. Each year we have a family reunion and do crazy things like make movies, or invent games. These things create memories for generations. This year our family reunion was going to be in late July at the Oregon Coast. Sadly, we recently cancelled our family reunion due to GAS PRICES. It would have cost over \$700 per family just to drive to the Oregon Coast. Since our family consists of 5 collective young families—it was just too high of an expense for many of us. \$700 in gas is just absurd! We are so disappointed! We have been looking forward to this vacation for over a year! There was no way back in August of 2007 that we could have predicted the rise in gas prices. What was feasible then is impossible now. All because of the rise in gas prices. Our family believes in being self sufficient and I believe that America should start being the independent nation we claim to be. Let's use our own oil to create our own gas to put into our own cars so that we can take care of our own families. Thank you for the opportunity to share.

CAMI, Meridian.

SENATOR CRAPO: Rising energy costs are driving up the costs of virtually everything and rapidly deteriorating the American standard of living. We are having to cut costs wherever possible to compensate because our wages are not going up equally with energy costs. I am so very frustrated with the US Congress. They are inept! They argue instead of taking action. Whenever a good bill comes up they tag it with riders full of wasteful spending. I never thought I'd see a day when the USA was so close to a

real depression. Our economy and dollar are heading down the tubes and nothing is done. Of course it is the fault of years of bad government for ruining our economy and it is only going to get worse. I have no faith in the majority of the idiots running this country. It is like no one has any basic common sense or fiscal management skills. It makes me sick!

TOM.

Our young married couples are really feeling the pinch of gas costs. Since travel is necessary in southeastern Idaho, we are left with no choice but to pay. We have felt the need to help our married kids pay for gas, which cuts into other budget items, such as food, medicines etc. Our students really feel the pinch since tuition costs have also risen.

We strongly support lessening our dependence as a nation, by updating refineries, and drilling. Thank you.

CURTIS, Driggs.

SOMALIA

Mr. FEINGOLD. Mr. President, although Somalia's 9 million people have suffered from violence, natural disasters, and lawlessness for decades, the humanitarian and human rights crisis they face seems to keep getting worse. On Monday, the United Nations' humanitarian coordinator for the Horn of Africa announced that due to fighting between rival militias, successive droughts, sharply rising food prices, and a collapse of the Somali currency, more than 3.5 million Somalis will need emergency food relief in the next 3 months.

On June 9, the United Nations' Special Representative for Somalia, Mr. Ahmedou Ould Abdallah, announced the first piece of good news from Somalia in a long time. With support from the U.S.'s own Special Envoy for Somalia, Ambassador John Yates—as well as representatives from the UK, Djibouti, Saudi Arabia, the African Union, the League of Arab States, the Organization of Islamic Conference, and the European Union—Mr. Abdallah succeeded in brokering an agreement between Somalia's internationally recognized Transitional Federal Government, T.F.G., and a faction of the opposition Alliance for the Re-Liberation of Somalia, A.R.S.

We cannot be naïve, however, because there have been numerous such agreements in the past in which ceasefires, political cooperation, and efforts to promote peace, justice, reconstruction, and reconciliation were promised. The outcome could be different this time, if the international community commits the political and material resources necessary to see it through. External actors were a critical driver behind the peace talks in Djibouti and the resulting agreement, which ends with a call for international support that was echoed in the signing statements of the two rival political leaders. At the same time, we must recognize that extremist groups like al Shabaab have not accepted this peace deal and intend to continue fighting. They should not be allowed to derail the recently signed

agreement. Indeed, by bringing the ARS into the institutional fold and consolidating a legitimate peace, the international community is more likely to see al Shabaab marginalized and rendered ineffective. This is not to say the road forward will be smooth, but taking steps to encourage existing divisions between the ARS and al Shabaab may create a path for ARS moderates to press for dismantling al Shabaab.

Mr. President, Mr. Abdallah should be commended for this achievement, but more than back-patting is in order. His success as a mediator—and indeed, the leverage and credibility of the United States and those who share our vision of a stable, peaceful Somalia—rests upon the steps taken in the next days and weeks to facilitate the implementation of this agreement. Immediate, adequate, and coordinated action is needed to ensure that this most recent agreement does not meet the fate of its predecessors, with potentially more devastating consequences.

Last month, this body passed a resolution I introduced, which called on Somalia's rival factions to recommit to an inclusive political dialogue and pledged international support for sustainable peace and security in Somalia and across the Horn of Africa. Mr. Abdallah and others have done their part. Now it is time for the international community to make good on our word.

NOMINATION OF HARVEY JOHNSON

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, on April 18, I announced my intention to object to any unanimous-consent request for the Senate to take up the nomination of Harvey E. Johnson who has been nominated by President Bush to serve as Deputy Administrator of the Federal Emergency Management Agency. I did so because, prior to his confirmation as Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security, Michael Chertoff told me in my office that if confirmed he would move expeditiously to implement the National Emergency Technology Guard—NET Guard—program. Unfortunately, Secretary Chertoff had failed to honor that pledge.

However, I am pleased to say that this morning the Department of Homeland Security has finally issued a solicitation for applications for a NET Guard pilot program, effectively beginning the implementation process. It is years late, but at last the Department is moving forward with this critical program.

In light of this action, I will no longer object to any unanimous-consent request for the Senate to take up Mr. Johnson's nomination. I will, however, continue to closely monitor DHS's actions on NET Guard.

I ask unanimous consent that a copy of the Department of Homeland Security's press release announcing the pilot program be printed in the RECORD.