

MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, there will now be a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each, with the Republicans controlling the first 30 minutes and the majority controlling the next 30 minutes.

The Senator from Texas.

ORDER OF PROCEDURE

Mr. CORNYN. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent to split our time equally between myself, the Senator from Georgia, and the Senator from Missouri.

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

ENERGY

Mr. CORNYN. Madam President, after the last election in 2006, the Democrats gained control of both the House and Senate. With that victory comes responsibility; that is, to manage the agenda in a way that addresses America's most urgent priorities. Unfortunately, we have seen a record that does not reflect well and, perhaps, is one reason why poll numbers for the Congress are at a historic low. The American people, according to the latest Rasmussen and Gallup Polls I have seen, have given Congress the lowest ratings since polling began. One might ask, why is that? It is something we should all be concerned about.

First, we know it took 145 days until we finally passed a reauthorization of the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act. Thanks to the good work of Senators ROCKEFELLER and BOND on a bipartisan basis, they came up with a good bill. Unfortunately, we dawdled for 145 days on our ability to gather intelligence by listening to communications between foreign terror subjects. We waited for 145 days to finally get that done. Thankfully, we finally did. The rest of the record is not as good as even that. For 604 days, the Colombia Free Trade Agreement has been left pending. In Texas, we sell \$2.3 billion worth of agricultural goods and manufactured goods to Colombia each year. It bears a tariff because Congress has refused to take up, principally because of the Speaker of the House, Ms. PELOSI, the Colombian Free Trade Agreement that would remove those barriers to American goods being sold in Colombia. Unfortunately, it is not a two-way street, because Colombian goods bear no tariff coming into the United States. This is an example of the congressional inaction shooting American agriculture and the manufacturing sector in the foot when it comes to their ability to compete in a global economy, due to mismanagement of the agenda.

For 749 days, judicial nominees have been waiting for an up-or-down vote on

the Senate floor. I disagree with the distinguished majority leader. Judges do matter. People need access to courts. We might as well put a padlock on the front door of the courthouse if we are not going to confirm well-qualified judicial nominees to serve. Whether it is victims of crime who need access to the courts or a small businessman or woman who has a civil dispute they need resolved in a court of law, those people are being denied access to justice because we are not confirming enough judges nominated by the President.

Finally, it has been 815 days since Speaker PELOSI, before she ran for her current position, said Democrats, if elected and given the responsibility and the privilege of serving as leaders of the Congress, would come up with a commonsense plan to relieve prices of gasoline at the pump. Back when she assumed control of the House and when Democrats assumed control of the Senate, gasoline was \$2.33 a gallon. Today it is \$4.11, and we are still waiting for that commonsense plan to relieve the pain at the pump.

It is no secret the price of energy is driving up the price of all sorts of commodities, including food. I recently was at a food bank in Houston where they said the demand for their services to provide food to people who can't otherwise provide for themselves has gone through the roof because the cost of food has gone up, along with the cost of gasoline and energy.

We want to try to work with our colleagues on the other side. I hope we can on this Energy bill the majority leader has brought to the floor. But it only addresses a narrow aspect of the problem, speculation on the commodities futures market. We need a comprehensive bill to deal with the law of supply and demand and to acknowledge that Congress has been part of the problem and not part of the solution by imposing moratoria on development of oil and gas reserves on the Outer Continental Shelf for 27 years. Last year, when Congress put a ban on development of the oil shale in Colorado, Wyoming, and Utah, Congress became part of the problem and not part of the solution, when it comes to producing more oil domestically and relying less on imported oil from the Middle East.

I have been fascinated by the Presidential campaigns, the slogans the different parties have adopted. I know we have seen Senator OBAMA say "Yes, we can" and talk about change. But unfortunately, the answer from our friends on the other side of the aisle, when it comes to a commonsense energy policy, when it comes to bringing down the price of oil by producing more American supply, seems to be: No, we can't.

We would love to work with our friends on the other side of the aisle to say, yes, we can address the needs of the American people and help relieve some of the pain they are suffering at the pump. But every time we bring up

an energy proposal, whether it is on nuclear energy, clean coal, offshore exploration, oil shale or ANWR, it seems we get an answer of no. The so-called energy bills our friends on the other side of the aisle have proposed do not produce one drop of additional energy or one kilowatt of additional electricity. How can you call that an energy policy?

The new energy produced as a result of our friends on the other side saying no, instead of yes, to bipartisan efforts to solve the problems has been no new energy produced. Our friend, Senator MENENDEZ from New Jersey, said we need to talk less and act more. I would agree with that. We need to talk less and act more. Unfortunately, what we have received so far is a lot of talk and no action. We need action to help bring down the price of gasoline at the pump.

Republicans believe we need a comprehensive policy that conserves energy and eliminates waste. Recently, I was in Tyler, TX, at a Brookshire Grocery, where they have modified their tractor-trailer rigs to use less diesel and modified the speed at which they drive. They are reducing consumption of the skyrocketing prices of diesel. We can conserve and use less, but we also need to find more. It makes no sense, as some have suggested, that we ought to sue OPEC to get them to open the spigot even wider so we can send more money overseas to the Middle East and to the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries. That makes no sense whatsoever, to pass higher tax burdens on those people who produce domestic energy. We tried that back in the 1980s during the Carter Presidency. All it did was drive down domestic production and drive up foreign imports. Eventually, as we all know, higher taxes get passed on to the consumer. That is not an answer.

We believe the answer to our energy problems is to find more and use less. As we travel this bridge to a clean energy future, we know we need more renewable fuels—wind energy, solar—to develop electricity. Yes, we need biofuels, but we have to work through the problem of using food for fuel that has contributed to higher food prices. We need a balanced energy policy.

We implore the distinguished majority leader not to try to check the box to try to say we have done something, when, in fact, we have done nothing to address high prices at the pump, and to work with us to allow us to increase supply of domestic energy. We could produce as many as 3 million additional barrels of oil a day from American sources, if Congress would simply get out of the way, lift the moratoria, and allow that exploration and production to begin. If we did that, it would send an important signal to the commodities futures markets that Congress is not going to stand in the way and that more supply will be available in the future. I believe it would have a dramatic impact and a dramatic reduction on the price of future contracts for

oil, much as we saw the President's announcement that he was lifting the executive moratorium on offshore exploration seemed to have a dramatic impact in one day, lowering the price of oil by about \$8.

We ask, as respectfully and earnestly as we know how, the majority leader not to make this another political exercise but to work with us to try to create a real solution. It would reflect well on all of us, Republicans and Democrats, and we would see our basement-level popularity ratings go up.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Georgia.

Mr. CHAMBLISS. Madam President, I rise to talk about the issue of gas prices. As I have done over the last several weeks, I wish to read a couple of letters I have received from Georgians. I know everybody in here is similar to me. You have thousands and thousands of these. But this shows how critically important this particular issue is to every single American.

Scott Needling of McDonough, GA, writes:

Senator Chambliss: I'm fed up with Congress ignoring the will of the American people. Stop playing politics, and act on the will of the people. We have been demanding that you drill and use our 3 trillion barrels of oil. We need other resource avenues that the last three administrations [have not] addressed. Stop the partisan politics and pass the will of the people. The American people do not want a socialistic society, period. Fix the problem.

That is a very frustrated constituent.

Robin Lasseter of Tifton, GA, writes:

Senator Chambliss: Please do something about the gas prices. I am a stay at home mom and with raising a family on one income, the price of gas is cutting us short on our needs. Something needs to be done soon. We are having to cut corners in a lot of different places in order to afford gas to and from work. Everything is increasing except wages. We both have a college education and drive fuel efficient cars, but the money we bring in just isn't stretching far enough.

This is a sample of the issues facing real people out there and they are looking to Congress for relief. I just left an Energy Committee hearing or roundtable discussion. The Presiding Officer was also there. There were two energy experts there. I wish to read several bullet points that were mentioned by these individuals who deal with this issue every single day and have a long history of studying it.

The first gentleman said, at the bottom line, supply and demand is the cause of the increase in prices today, but it is a complex issue. It ranges from the Iranian risk factor, all the way to the markets. He also said the cost of exploration has doubled in the last 4 years. The reason is a shortage of labor, a shortage of engineers, and a shortage of steel. In the markets, while speculation is a hot topic and transparency is a good thing, why have commodities risen? His answer was: First of all, the value of the dollar; secondly, oil is a good investment, and it is a good hedge against inflation.

The second gentleman said that between 2003 and 2005, there has been a shock of increased demand and decreased supply. As a result of that, the excess capacity of oil on hand by oil-producing countries has been exhausted. He said there are fears that new fields are not coming online. There are fears there is disruption in the marketplace. Between 2004 and today in the market, there has not been enough supply. There is barely an increasing amount of supply each and every year. He said oil is now a financial asset, that this happened sometime not in recent weeks or months but back in 2006 and that the primary driver of the increase in oil prices is the value of the dollar, just like the first speaker commented. He said people are looking for a place to invest. Pension funds are looking for a place to invest. They are looking for a way to hedge against the value of the dollar. Lastly, the increase in demand, which we have seen in the United States over the last couple years, is not being met by our global partners.

I say this to indicate to the American people how complex this problem is. We, as policymakers, have to take our time to make sure that we get it right with respect to whatever type of policy we set with legislation.

I think there are four issues we have to think about with respect to trying to find a solution to gas prices.

First of all, I do not think there is any question that we have to have more domestic production of oil. Today, we depend upon foreign imports for 62 percent of our petroleum needs. That has gotten way out of bounds. So it is imperative that we look for additional resources inside the United States. We have those resources. The resources are available from different assets. Some are controversial. Some are not controversial. We as policymakers have an obligation to find those areas for domestic exploration that we can get done in the short term and make sure we move that balance away from 62 percent to certainly something that is much lower and much more reasonable.

Secondly, from a gas supply standpoint—not oil supply, a gas supply standpoint—we simply have to have more gas refined in this country. There may be some oil companies that do not have excess capacity. They may be producing all they can produce. We need to make sure there are incentives out there, as we have on the books today, to incentivize additional production. If they do not have excess capacity, we need to make sure they are able to build new refineries. We have not seen a refinery built in the United States in the last 25 years. Certainly, we know what has happened with demand for gasoline in the last 25 years.

The third thing we need to do is continue down the road of research and development of alternative fuels, alternative fuels such as ethanol and biodiesel. These, again, are not the total

answer to the problem, but we have taken steps in this body to make sure we have an increase in the supply of alternative fuels, particularly ethanol, over the next several years.

In my home State—which has never been an ethanol-producing State; thus, we have never been an ethanol user—we now have two ethanol production plants under construction. In the farm bill we just passed, we greatly expanded the energy title. I am very proud of that energy title we put in place in the current farm bill because here is what it does: We recognize that we need more production of ethanol in this country. We also recognize that, with the mandates we have put in place over the last couple of years, we have had some unintended consequences that have arisen.

We have 101 ethanol-producing facilities in this country today. We have an additional 100 that are either under construction or are on the drawing board to be completed within the next 14 to 16 months. All but two of those ethanol-producing facilities are resourced with corn. So, as a result of the mandates we have put in place, the demand for corn has risen for the production of ethanol, to the point where we are now seeing food prices increase.

The price of food at the grocery store today, based on the increase in commodity prices, is truly not reflected yet. The increase in food prices we are seeing today, in my opinion, is solely the result of additional transportation costs or energy costs. This fall, when our manufacturers of food products start taking in new commodities at the new prices, that is when you are really going to see an increase in the cost of food.

As a result of that, in the farm bill, when we looked at this issue, we said: We don't need to incentivize the additional production of alternative fuels from corn-based ethanol-producing facilities. What we need to do is to incentivize the production of ethanol from alternative sources, such as cellulosic products.

In Georgia, we cannot grow corn in the quantities they do in the Midwest. We have a hotter climate, a longer growing season. Our soil is not quite as rich, and we do not have the dependable rain resource they have. But there is one thing we can grow like nobody else in the country; that is, a pine tree.

The two exceptions to the 201 facilities I mentioned earlier—one located in Colorado, one located in my home State of Georgia—are going to be manufacturing ethanol from cellulosic products. In our case, in Georgia, it is going to be from pine trees. That is the type of innovation and creation we have provided for in the farm bill, and it is part of the equation we need to have in place as we move forward.

There is one other area, and that is the area of conservation. We simply have to move down the road of making sure we have alternative vehicles available for those individuals who really

want to implement conservation measures from a personal household perspective. Electric cars, battery-operated cars—those types of vehicles need to be available.

We have a bipartisan effort underway to help solve this problem. I look forward to continuing to work with Republicans and Democrats to see a resolution of this issue regarding gas prices.

Mr. President, I yield back.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BROWN). The Senator's time is expired.

The senior Senator from Missouri is recognized.

Mr. BOND. Mr. President, I am grateful to the majority leader for moving to a discussion of energy. Energy is one of the most important subjects I hear about when I go back to Missouri.

Americans are suffering record pain at the pump. They want help now. It is clear, if you are listening to the people at home, they are saying: We are all suffering. Farmers, truckers, families, and small businesses are suffering from record-high prices. Farmers are telling me their costs for farming and transportation have gone up. Nitrogen, drying—those costs have gone up. Truckers, small trucking company operators are laying off people. They are shutting down because the prices are so high and they are not able to pass along all the full costs. Families are telling me they have had to change their family budgets, their plans, because their budgets will not accommodate it. They will not accommodate \$4-plus gas, going to \$5. They are telling me—they are telling us—stop fighting, stop the gimmicks, stop half-measures. Do something now that will bring gas prices down.

So this morning, I ask my colleagues in the Senate: Let's get real about lowering gas prices. Any real plan that has a chance to lower gas prices must increase production, increase conservation, look at speculation and marketplace impacts. That is what I support. That is the Gas Price Reduction Act that more than 40 of my colleagues and I have introduced, and we hope more will join us.

It is like a three-legged stool: without all three legs, it will not stand up, it will not pass the test. Too many plans, such as the Democratic leadership's speculation-only bill, have only one leg. We know how long a one-legged stool will hold up.

Fundamentally, we must find more and use less, as the Senators from Texas and Georgia said. It is economics 101. It is amazing how well the American people out in the real world—where we live when we are not here working—understand that when prices are going up so rapidly, that is because demand is outstripping supply. We need to find more oil to relieve the pressure and get prices down.

The Gas Price Reduction Act will supply more oil. Right now, there are at least 18 billion barrels of oil waiting for us off our Atlantic and Pacific

coasts. Many think there are many times more. That is a 10-year supply we are blocking from ourselves by our legislative action. The Gas Price Reduction Act will open those offshore areas and allow us to put American oil to use helping America.

For those who say it will take years to get, they ignore the immediate price-lowering effect of the news of new supplies. It happened this past week. Since the President announced the suspension of the Presidential moratorium on offshore drilling earlier this week, prices have fallen \$10. It is now up to Congress to do the same thing and bring immediate and long-term, lasting relief to the American families and workers. The fact that we do that will bring prices down.

For those States concerned about opening and drilling off their shores, we allow States to opt in or opt out of the program. If California does not want to participate, that is fine, but that should not block the people of the State of Virginia from saying: We want to explore for oil and gas and share in the revenues and provide our people the benefits of a greater supply, which will bring the prices down.

For those who are concerned about the environment—and I hope all are; we should be—one only needs to look at how environmentally safe modern oil-drilling technology has become. We put in all kinds of standards and controls. I have seen oil drilling above the Arctic Circle, at Prudhoe Bay. The caribou, the birds, the flora flourish. Even the mosquitoes love it. It has caused no environmental damage. Please note that when we compare our environmental standards to those in other countries, our standards for development, exploration, and refining are much higher than other countries.

Some people want to go beg OPEC to produce more. Does anybody think they are going to be concerned about the air emissions, which affect the entire world, as we are in the United States? Do you believe Venezuela or Iran is going to have the same high standards we have? No, they will not.

Here in the United States, the terrible tragedy of Katrina at least proved that modern offshore drilling is environmentally safe. There was no significant spillage of oil when the hurricane blew over thousands of oil rigs in the Gulf of Mexico. It shut them down, drove the prices up, with no environmental damage.

Some say we need to force the oil companies to use leases we have before we issue new leases. They want to say: Use it or lose it. Well, welcome to the party. Guess what. That requirement is already in the leases. The leases are 6, 8, 10 years, and if they do not find any oil, then they go back to the Government. Maybe somebody else can. But they pay. They take the chance. They go into areas they have not explored, not done any seismic testing. If they do not find it, then they do not do it. That is the reason they call it exploration,

because a lease is no guarantee that oil is actually present. They have to take an eyeball look at it and guess. Only after they sign the lease do they have the permission to begin seismic exploration. There is a lot of land. The oil people tell me they have a lot of goat pastures. Goat pastures are oil leases which appear to be good but are great for raising goats because they won't produce any oil. Most of these leases show no prospects for oil that is worth extracting.

Now, I would be happy to lease them a few acres in my backyard. I would be happy to have them look for it. Unfortunately, we have not had any history of having oil there, but I would be happy to have them explore for it. If they find it there, I would welcome their drilling in my backyard.

But instead of real plans to supply the American people with significant amounts of oil, we get half-measures that will do little, although calling them half-measures is probably giving them too much credit.

One plan from Democrats in the House is to raid the Strategic Petroleum Reserve and divert 10 percent of its volume to consumers—70 million barrels. Putting aside that the Reserve is for national emergencies, such as in times of war, that plan would only provide 3½ days' worth of oil. We consume over 20 million barrels a day.

What would have made a difference would have been if President Clinton had signed the authorization we passed in Congress in 1995 to explore in ANWR. The best estimates are—well, he said at the time: It will not do anything for 10 years. That was 1995. Ten years was up in 2005, and we would have been getting at least a million, and probably more, barrels a day.

But we have introduced the Gas Price Reduction Act that would provide struggling families and workers the equivalent of 10 years of new oil supplies versus the 3 days of new supplies from raiding the Strategic Petroleum Reserve.

The facts are clear: Only real relief will come from the Gas Price Reduction Act.

Of course, there are other things we can and should do to cut our oil use down the road and ensure there is no abuse. We are already using renewable fuels, lots of corn ethanol and beginning soy diesel. When we get the project right, I agree with my colleague from Georgia that cellulosic ethanol will be a help. But corn ethanol is not the reason why food prices are up. Eighty percent of the price of food is off farm. Corn production went up by 2.6 billion bushels last year. Only 900 million went into ethanol. Stop scapegoating ethanol. It is part of the solution, not part of the problem.

I will reserve the rest of my remarks for later, and I appreciate the chance.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Pennsylvania is recognized.