

ENERGY

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, when historians look back at the 110th Congress, they will say the most vexing domestic issue we faced was a rapid and dramatic rise in the price of gas at the pump. As it stands today, they will have to conclude that the Democratic leaders ignored the problem by refusing to unlock the domestic energy resources that were put off limits when gas and oil were cheap.

If these historians do their homework, they will note the irony in all of this. They will note that these same Democrats were the ones who took the majority less than 2 years ago, promising to do something about gas prices that were a lot lower back then than they are today.

I recently received a letter from a dialysis center in Kentucky. It was an urgent plea to do something about gas prices. The letter said some of the rural patients who have to go to this center for treatment three times a week are now foregoing their dialysis treatment because they cannot afford the gas to get there. This is the kind of crisis high gas prices is for low-income and sick people.

After reading that, I have a simple question for our friends across the aisle: If you won't act now, with dialysis patients unable to get into town for treatment, when will you unlock the natural resources Americans have right under their own feet? What is it going to take? Clearly, this is a very serious problem for the American people, and we have an obligation to address it, and the time to do it is now. I am afraid the Democrats who run the Senate want it all to somehow go away. They have been going to great lengths to make sure it goes away. They are cancelling hearings when they are afraid the issue might come up, and they are muzzling their own Members, more than a dozen of whom favor a balanced solution that includes more domestic production and increased conservation. They are telling them the same thing they are telling the American people: No, we can't.

The problem we face, as everyone knows, is that the demand for oil is rising faster than the supply, and the solution, as everyone knows, is to increase supply and lower demand. Yet this week, the Democratic leadership in Congress is saying: No, we can't. They are saying: No, we can't produce a single barrel of oil at home.

Instead of increasing supply, they are trying to distract us with the same blame game they roll out whenever the demands of some special interest group conflict with the will of the people.

This time they have turned their attention on speculators. They say the reason gas prices have nearly doubled since the Democrats took over a year and a half ago is the speculators.

Well, Republicans have no problem strengthening regulation of the futures markets. That is part of the bill that 44 of us are sponsoring. But if Congress

does not allow any new exploration, it is perfectly clear what the speculation about future prices will be: not good. The speculators are betting on scarcity, and the majority is helping to prove them right.

So here we are. After months of frustration, Americans are hearing from the Democratic leaders that Congress is going to do one thing about the single most vexing issue in America today. The Democratic leaders are telling the American people that the solution is to write up some new guidelines for energy traders, call it a day, and head home. And if we do not support this very timid solution, they will go back to the blame game again. They will say Republicans voted against lowering gas prices, when the fact is not a single person in America who does not sit behind a desk on the other side of the aisle thinks this particular speculation provision will do anything to lower gas prices.

Let's be perfectly clear: A vote for this narrow bill alone is not a serious vote about high gas prices. It is an abdication of our responsibilities as lawmakers. It is an insult to the American people who are demanding every single day that we do something to ease their pain at the pump.

This is not a theoretical problem. This is not a looming problem. It is an urgent problem. It is an urgent problem with families who have to struggle to put food on the table or send their kids to school. It is an urgent problem for the dialysis patients in my State who can't get treatment because they can't afford to get to town to see the doctor. And Americans are hearing the Democratic leadership's response, which is: No, we can't.

The ranking member of the Energy and Natural Resources Committee, my good friend from New Mexico, put it this way. He said that in his 37 years of service in the Senate, he has never seen a single bigger problem met with a smaller solution. The Senator from New Mexico said he had never seen a bigger problem met with a smaller solution.

I would put it this way: Americans are saying the house is on fire, and the Democratic leadership is showing up at the scene with squirt guns.

Let's put the scope of this bill in perspective. During last year's energy debate—a year ago—on the Energy Independence and Security Act, 331 amendments were proposed, 49 amendments were agreed to, and gas prices were \$3.06 a gallon. Two years before that, during the debate on the Energy Policy Act, 235 amendments were proposed, 57 amendments were agreed to, and gas was selling for \$2.26 a gallon.

With gas prices in some places at more than double what they were then and when Americans are clamoring for dramatic action and when it is clearly the No. 1 issue in the country, the Democratic majority wants us to tighten the leash on a few speculators and then head home and do nothing else until next year.

To drive down gas prices, we could be opening the Outer Continental Shelf. Democratic leaders say: No, we can't. To drive down gas prices, we could be lifting the ban on development of vast oil shale deposits in Western States that sit on three times the reserves of Saudi Arabia. The Democratic leaders say: No, we can't.

To drive down gas prices, we could be approving incentives for battery-powered electric cars and trucks. Democratic leaders say: No, we can't.

To drive down gas prices, we could be voting to open untapped American oil. Democratic leaders say: No, we can't.

To drive down gas prices, we could be voting for new clean nuclear technology, but Democratic leaders say: No, we can't.

To drive down gas prices, we could be approving new and promising coal-to-liquid technology. Again, Democratic leaders say: No, we can't.

When will the Democratic leadership listen to the 77 percent of Americans who want us to use our own domestic resources to drive down the price of gas and say: Yes, we can. When will they listen to more than a dozen of their own Members on the other side of the aisle who are saying: Yes, we can.

Americans never imagined they would be paying these prices at the pump, but if the Democratic leadership has its way, Americans will be paying even more in the years to come. When that time comes and there is no one else to blame, they will look around and see that there is no one else around to blame but themselves. Then Americans will know whom to blame, and I can tell my colleagues it will not be the speculators.

Mr. President, I see my friend from Arizona on his feet, and I am wondering if he wishes to ask me a question.

Mr. KYL. Mr. President, I wonder if my colleague would yield for two questions.

Mr. McCONNELL. I would be happy to.

Mr. KYL. I thank the Senator. Mr. President, I believe at least twice the majority leader has made a comment about my colleague from Arizona, JOHN MCCAIN, and I wanted to see if the Republican leader's understanding is the same as mine.

The majority leader said: "McCain says drilling is only psychological and won't make a difference."

I have checked the actual record of what Senator MCCAIN said. It was a discussion of offshore drilling, which Senator MCCAIN strongly supports on the Outer Continental Shelf, and the question was whether there would be short-term relief. Here is precisely what Senator MCCAIN said in response:

I don't see an immediate relief, but I do see that exploitation of existing reserves that may exist—and in view of many experts that do exist off our coasts—is also a way that we need to provide relief. Even though it may take some years, the fact that we are exploiting those reserves would have psychological impact that I think is beneficial.

Now, I ask the leader: Is it correct, in your view, that what Senator McCain was saying is that while the benefits of production would take some years to achieve, there could be an immediate psychological benefit simply from the decision that we were going to do this, such as the \$20 reduction in the price of a barrel of oil following shortly after the President's announcement that he was going to lift the moratorium on offshore drilling?

Mr. MCCONNELL. My understanding of Senator McCain's position is the same as my good friend from Arizona. I believe he states correctly the position of his senior colleague from Arizona on this important issue of whether it would be useful for America—the third-largest oil producer in the world, sitting on vast reserves—to expand the usage of those reserves, particularly on the Outer Continental Shelf.

Mr. KYL. Secondly, Mr. President, the second question. The Republican leader said a moment ago that speculators were betting on scarcity and the majority is doing everything to prove them right.

With respect to a decision to begin production off our shores on the Outer Continental Shelf, is it the Senator's opinion that this would have a beneficial effect on drawing down the price of futures in the oil market because the decision would be seen as a commitment to produce more?

Mr. MCCONNELL. I would say to my friend from Arizona, my view on that is probably not as significant as others. For example, the famous oilman, T. Boone Pickens, who has been in town this week and who has met with Republicans and Democrats, has made it quite clear that he thinks we ought to be doing all these things, both on the find-more side, which would certainly involve greater use of the Outer Continental Shelf which is currently off-limits. He thinks we ought to be doing all these things. I gather that most experts understand the law of supply and demand, and if you increase supply and diminish demand, you are working in tandem to get gas prices down. I think it makes elementary good sense that that is the only way we will be able to make progress on this issue.

Mr. KYL. I thank the leader.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

WARM IN WINTER AND COOL IN SUMMER ACT—MOTION TO PROCEED

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of the motion to proceed to S. 3186 which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

Motion to proceed to Calendar No. 835, S. 3186, a bill to provide funding for the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program.

Mr. DURBIN addressed the Chair.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the time until 10:30 a.m. shall be equally divided and controlled between the two leaders or their designees.

The assistant majority leader is recognized.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I was going to ask unanimous consent to speak as in leader time on behalf of Senator REID, who is not here, following Senator MCCONNELL.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Is there objection?

Mr. DOMENICI. Reserving the right to object, I understand the remaining time until 10:30 is already allocated, half of it to the Democrats and half to us. From our side, I intend to claim our half, and I will use it when the time arises.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The time until 10:30 is equally divided.

Mr. DOMENICI. Does the Senator from Illinois desire to speak now? Is that what he is saying? I am glad to let that happen.

Mr. DURBIN. Yes. I ask to be allocated the Democratic time, and I am going to yield to the Senator from Missouri to begin that.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator is correct. The assistant majority leader.

Mr. KYL. Mr. President, might I clarify? There was no objection to the assistant leader speaking as part of the Democratic time as it is now allocated; is that right?

Mr. DURBIN. I would like to yield to the Senator from Missouri.

Mrs. MCCASKILL. Mr. President, I would like to ask, if I could, the minority whip one brief question before he leaves the Chamber. I notice you all were trying to clarify the position of our colleague from Arizona on drilling, and this is simply a yes or no question. Does Senator McCain support drilling in ANWR?

Mr. KYL. Mr. President, I am happy to respond. I was not only clarifying his position but ensuring people understood what the majority leader said about his position was incorrect. Senator McCain does not support drilling in ANWR, but he does support drilling off our coastal shores and the Outer Continental Shelf.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The assistant majority leader is recognized.

GAS PRICES

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, the motto of the Republicans in the Senate is: Talk more, produce less. Do you know what we offered them this week? We said to the Republicans: Here is the opportunity of a lifetime. Do you have a position on speculation? Do you think it is an issue? If you do, put your proposal on the floor and we will put our proposal on the floor. We will have an equal vote requirement, equal de-

bate time. We will go at it and we will let the Senate decide. We are not going to write your version of the speculation, you would not write ours, but you have every right to do that. The Republican response was: No, we are not interested in that. We don't think speculation is a problem.

Well, they ought to meet with the CEOs of the major airlines. They ought to spend a minute talking to them about what they feel because they are paying the jet fuel costs and they are cutting back on service and they are cutting back on employment. That is the reality of what they face today. Speculation, manipulation is a major concern. We have a responsible approach to it. The Republicans refuse to offer an alternative. OK. That is their decision.

Then we said to them: Why don't you present your energy bill? The Republican leader came to the floor with a litany of things the Republicans believe in. For over a week we have said to them: Put it in a bill offered on the floor. They have said: No, no. We would rather come to the floor and complain, rather than come to the floor and debate our approach.

I listened to the Republican leader as he came to the floor, and it is very clear to me. They don't want a debate and a vote. They want this issue to drag out forever and ever, amen. That is not what the American people want. They want us to tackle this thing, offer alternatives on the floor, debate them up or down, go forward.

It troubles me when the Republican leader repeatedly says—incorrectly—that when it comes to energy, from the Democratic view, we want to deal with speculation and, in his words, “do nothing else.” He forgets the whole second part of this—the Energy bill we are proposing on the Democratic side and they are going to propose on the Republican side. We offered them that. They turned us down.

I might also say there is no idea how many amendments the Republicans are going to offer. Two days ago, Senator KYL and I were on the floor, and he said there were 25 amendments. Senator SPECTER walked up and said: I have 2, so make that 27. Then Senator KYL said: Come to think of it, I have one too. We are up to 28. That was 2 days ago. This is growing similar to bacteria in a petri dish as the Republicans meet in their conference and dream up more amendments. That is good. It shows a creative mind at work, and it is a great exercise, but it isn't what the American people are asking for.

If you have a good set of ideas, offer them. You want to bring up more nuclear power, Senator DOMENICI? Put that in your package. You want to have more offshore drilling, put it in your package. You want to have coal to oil, put it in your package. If you believe in it, stand and fight for it. But they will not. They will not fight for it. They want to run. Run to the press and