

IDAHOANS SPEAK OUT ON HIGH ENERGY PRICES

Mr. CRAPO. Mr. President, in mid-June, I asked Idahoans to share with me how high energy prices are affecting their lives, and they responded by the hundreds. The stories, numbering well over 1,200, are heartbreaking and touching. While energy prices have dropped in recent weeks, the concerns expressed remain very relevant. To respect the efforts of those who took the opportunity to share their thoughts, I am submitting every e-mail sent to me through an address set up specifically for this purpose to the CONGRESSIONAL 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 today's letters printed in the RECORD.

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

We are your typical lower middle class family. My husband has a good job at FedEx where we are blessed to have good insurance benefits and stability; he is on the bottom of the totem pole, however so the wages leave something to be desired. I used to work for a local childcare center where I got free daycare for our 1-year-old son and was able to contribute an income. Last summer we were in a tight but good place in our lives and decided to purchase our first home. It is not much (it is a humble home) but it is ours. We moved in a week before Christmas and though things were very tight we were still doing "ok". We got pregnant again in January and were very excited. After all we were making it. Then in March I lost my job and the economy really started to hit us hard. Our tax returns were spent getting my car fixed, and our incentive package paid the mortgage and some bills. We were thankful that that money was there when we needed it but it was not spent as the government intended. We applied for public assistance while I looked for work but found out that we overqualify by only \$60 a month. This was frustrating considering most of the people in the waiting room were not here on a legal basis but their children (born in the U.S.) have right to the same assistance I was applying for. They pay no taxes because they are not here legally and are not required to report their income so of course they qualify and the funny thing is that I saw several drive away in nicer cars than even my parents own. I take in a child or two into our home to bring in some income because I do not have a degree and cannot find a job that pays more than daycare costs.

On to gas prices: I drive a Ford Focus, an affordable economical car, and my hubby has his old F-150, which is one of the only assets we actually own. We do not drive big fancy cars that take hundreds of dollars to fill up. My focus cost \$43 dollars last time I filled up (last Monday night) and my hubby's truck costs around \$65-\$70. That may not be a lot to you or anyone with a better job than we, but it is a lot more than we paid last year at this time and it is almost double to fill up my car from what it was when we got married (two years ago in October). Honestly,

Senator, we pray our way through every month. It is an honest miracle that we still have our home and that we have made our mortgage for the last 4 months. My husband works 12-hour days so the only logical solution was for me to look for a second job. It took a while given that no one wants to hire a lady who is 6 months pregnant. But I am blessed to have found a job at Cracker Barrel being a part-time waitress and working when my husband gets home to take our son and, with the help of family, we make it work. As you can imagine, it does not pay much (\$3.35/hour and then tips). I hate this arrangement, and I have not been working there long enough to see the benefits of having two jobs but I keep thinking that if I just keep at it then maybe we can get caught up and maybe even save enough money to pay the mortgage when I go on maternity leave in October. This is a long shot.

If gas prices (among other things) were lower it would help alleviate some of the strain on our family. The cost of food has gone up, though, too. If both of those things could be what they were, I may not have to work two jobs never seeing my husband and worrying about if I am going to do something bad to my unborn child by driving my body so hard. Even if it were only gas that went down, we might be able to swing it with just one job once we get caught up. Anything would help us at this point. I work any odd jobs I can find in addition my others. I went and counted votes when the elections took place in May and I made \$40, not much but it adds up if you save it! I know we are not as bad off as a lot of other people but we are not doing as well as we let people think either. Who wants to tell their friends and family that they are on the verge of losing everything? We are walking a tight scary line and if we fall off we are screwed. We just keep praying and working hard and so far God has not let us down. I know he will not but I do not know what his definition of ok is either. Maybe you could be the blessing we have been praying for, a small piece of a very big problem but like I said even a little bit can help a lot.

Thank you for your time,

KRISTI, Boise.

I travel about 20 miles each direction to work. It is really hurting me financially to continue paying these gas prices, but what am I to do? Quit my job? Try to sell my house so I can move closer to work? At this time I am going to continue to commute and reluctantly put my trust in my government to fix the problem. I am very skeptical that you folks will do anything about it because it seems like the government is more concerned about investigating professional sports and finger pointing about who is to blame for our nation's problems. As a citizen of Idaho and of the United States of America, I can tell you that I really do not care if our nation's problems are a result of Democrats, Republicans, or President Bush. Somebody has to act like a responsible adult, and the American public is waiting to see if our leaders are going to help us. Do you know what it is like to go to the gas station and see the dollar amount on the pump scroll so fast that your head spins?

My idea to alleviate our oil problems is to drill in the United States in those areas we know to contain oil. Why not? Who are we saving it for? How many jobs would be created if we were to drill on our own soil? Do not you think that creation of those jobs just might help our economy, as well as diminish our reliance on foreign countries for oil?

I appreciate the opportunity to share my story and ideas. Thank you, Senator Crapo. You seem to be the one that is stepping up.

MARK, Nampa.

In response to your email letter I would like to say that this country must do all of the things you mentioned such as developing our domestic oil and refining capacity; nuclear energy; clean coal; wind; solar; hydroelectric and hamsters on spinning wheels if that is what it takes. However, in order to realistically achieve these goals we must first deal with those forces that have been the stumbling block for many years; the environmentalists and their lackeys.

Now is the time to expose these people and their extremist hand-wringing positions for what they are. No reasonable person wants to pollute the air and/or water, but observe the "sky is falling" mentality when the Alaska pipeline was proposed. Every conceivable environmental catastrophe was predicted by the environmental lobby. Unfortunately for them, none of it happened. In fact, wildlife flourished after the pipeline went in and there has been no environmental degradation. The time is right to put on the fore court press against these people. Do it; do it today; and do it boldly and courageously. I look forward to reading the headlines in the newspaper to the affect "Senator Crapo shouts the truth from the Capitol Rotunda".

MIKE, Coeur d'Alene.

Finally a politician that is listening to the people. Now I know why I voted for you. The first few emails on this site are far more astute in presenting their views than I, but I think we should finally ignore the environmentalists and drill ASAP. The very act of starting to drill would probably bring down oil prices. Thanks for listening to your citizens in Idaho.

AUDEANE COX.

My initial reaction to the request for response was that it would be a waste of time. I am very frustrated with the ineffectiveness of Congress. The [partisan] in-fighting seems to be more important than the welfare of the Nation. I wish I could believe that the Senator would actually see/read the responses sent to him instead of just a compilation of data, but I do not.

In response to your request: One solution to saving gas, which would only be a small savings per vehicle but huge nationwide, would be to better manage the stoplights in every town and city. During the times of day and/or at locations where there is light traffic, the stoplights could be set such that the busiest street would get a flashing yellow caution signal and the minor street would have a flashing red stop/go signal. Each intersection would have to be evaluated separately for peak loads versus times of day. The largest impact would be during the night time hours. Not only would this save gas, it would save wear and tear on the vehicles—especially the brakes. Major intersections should be unaffected, day or night. What I have suggested would have a minimal cost—only manpower, to re-set the timers in the control boxes. Another possibility, which would be costly, would be to change-out the stoplight controllers to the type that senses traffic and only change the signal as needed. But either way, having to sit at a red light when there is zero cross traffic is foolish, especially when there is an easy solution.

A second topic that is energy-related is the ethanol craze. Too many people are getting too caught-up in the "green" philosophy, and not enough people are looking at the real costs of what they are promoting. You are taking food off of people's tables just to put it into fuel tanks. It costs every bit as much to process corn into gas as crude costs, there is no savings at the pump and the price of food at the grocer's is skyrocketing. This is a joke at this time! If the use of wheat

straw, corn stalks, hay, etc. (i.e. by-products), for ethanol production can be perfected, then you would have something worthwhile.

Further, the request also asked for a brief statement as to how the energy problem was affecting people. I am somewhat past the age that I expected/wanted to retire. But with the problems with the stock market, banking, mortgages, inflation (principally due to energy policies—or lack of same), etc., I am reluctant to go into retirement. Congress could help many retirees if they would rescind the income tax on Social Security. One of the assurances when Social Security was implemented was that it would not be taxed.

DON.

I thank you for the opportunity to share my thoughts. Next to the air we breathe and the water we drink, energy is tied to everything in life we do. Our entire economy is centered on affordable energy. As energy increases in cost (far too fast to be able to adjust to) everything else does as well since it is energy that is used for production, delivery, and services. As a nation, we cannot be held hostage to a dependency on other countries who hold major energy reserves that they are willing to exploit and yet keep the majority of their citizens uneducated and living in the stone ages. These foreign energy-controlling countries know that the American way of life and our infrastructure and economy is based on energy and will continue to use energy to gain control over our domestic and foreign politics. We as Americans must not allow ourselves to be dependent on foreign energy sources and not allow ourselves to be held hostage by domestic legal blocks by certain environmental groups who wish to prevent our country from being able to explore and produce our own energy sources. What we need to be able to do is take a step back to the early 60s where John Kennedy was able to spur on an all out effort to put a man on the moon by the end of the decade. We need to approve a measure to take emergency action now to start utilizing our own resources of energy to shift away from foreign dependence and at the same time take major efforts to promote expansion and creation of other resources as alternatives and how to make a gallon of gas go much farther than it does today. We need to stop blocking nuclear power plant creations with years of legal/environmental suits, push for the development of affordable efficient battery cells for electric vehicle conversion. For roughly \$5,000 a small car or truck can be converted to use DC electric but current lead acid cells do not hold enough charge for reasonable distance (limited to approximately 40 miles mile per charge) and are limited to lower speeds of 35–45 mph, making impractical for interstate or longer commutes, and lead acid batteries will only handle a limited number of charge and discharge cycles before needing replacement. I am all for and encourage wind and solar alternatives as well. These alternatives need to be backed and supported by state and federal incentives (tax credits to offset some of the costs) to encourage resident and business use and promote demand so that production costs can be reduced. Prizes have been offered privately to developed space vehicles that can take passengers on joy rides to the edge of space. Our government should be doing the same to encourage development of alternative energy. From a constituent viewpoint, congress and our countries executive administration have been ignoring for too long developing these alternatives. We should have learned from the 1970s implied shortage of oil and effects it had on our economy, but as soon as cheap oil was dumped on the market we became happy and no efforts

have been made to move away from foreign dependence on oil. We as a country did this to ourselves and now have to act immediately to solve our energy issues. This was probably more then you were asking for. How I am personally affected by high fuel prices is no different than others. I cannot afford to fly my aircrafts as often as I use to, or drive to my cabin in Garden Valley as often as I like. The pump is painful and it has impacted my desire to make larger purchases. I am remodeling my home instead of looking to move to a new one. If I were to buy new where I would like to buy to have a large home or lot, it would increase my commute and commute expenses. We eat out less and as people who love to travel, we have three time shares that are going to waste because of the rising cost of airfare. So far we can still feed ourselves but as large company expenses for energy goes up, cut backs will be made in other areas such as employee salary and head count. So rising fuel costs is going to be felt everywhere and on everything.

MICHAEL, *Meridian*.

The question seems to be whether or not the United States needs to drill for our own oil. That seems a no brainer to me. I believe we depend on other countries far too much as it is. It is time we started developing our own method of providing energy without the use of foreign oil. There seems to be an argument that drilling our own oil will not help in the short term. That may be right, but we need to start now so that this development can get underway for the future. If not now, when? We are a nation founded on the principal that we can take care of ourselves and do not need others to make our country self-reliant and strong. The time is now to start to drill for our own oil and if need be to build more refineries to develop it into usable forms. I truly believe if our country does not start taking care of its own energy resources, we will be putting ourselves in jeopardy as a strong independent nation.

Personally, I will have enough gas to get to work and back. However, I will no longer have enough to go visit my 3-week-old grandson and my other family who live 200 miles away. I teach school and even though I am at the top of the pay scale I have to live on a very tight budget. I am waiting to see how this gas increase affects the amount of money I have left to eat on. I am afraid the old adage, "To rob Peter to pay Paul", will be in use shortly. My whole family helps each other financially. I help my son who has a hard time finding a job that pays more than minimum wage. My sisters help their children who also have minimum wage-paying jobs and our parents help all of us. Now that these prices are so high, we will not be able to help each other and who knows what will happen. One of my sisters and I do not even own our own homes, so we do not have the equity of a home to rely on.

There are many other issues I feel strongly about; demanding countries pay us the money they have borrowed, equal taxation for all Americans, minimum wages, the war in Iraq, etc, but those are issues for other communications

Thanks for asking for our input. I hope this input helps convince legislators that we had better start taking care of our middle and lower classes if this nation is to once again be strong, self-reliant, and independent.

KATHY, *Nampa*.

There are six of us living in our house. The recent hike in electrical which may go up again due to the high price of fuel. It has strapped us big time. We are not keeping up as we once were because my wages aren't

going up to compensate for price hikes in food, and services besides the fuel hikes.

I have been vague about actual numbers because of our privacy, but it is still none the less true about not being able to keep up due to everything going up along with the fuel prices, and not the wages. I really do not like government getting involved in this too much. What can we really do as a people to reduce this or better yet stop it?

JIM.

TRIBUTE TO ROBERT AND VIRGINIA HOWRIGAN

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, today marks the 60th wedding anniversary of Richard and Virginia Howrigan. I am happy to have the opportunity to congratulate my good friends who have given so much to the State of Vermont.

The Howrigans are one of the best-known families in Franklin County; their family name has been synonymous with successful and conscientious dairy farming for decades. Marcelle and I value our friendship with them.

Over the course of the past 60 years, Robert and Virginia have worked and grown together. They are wonderful parents, hard workers, and have always remained true to their faith.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to have an excerpt from a February 8, 2009, Burlington Free Press article honoring the Howrigans printed in the RECORD.

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

[From the Burlington Free Press, Feb. 8, 2009]

COUPLES SHARE SECRETS OF LOVE, MARRIAGE (By Sally Pollack)

Flowers, chocolates and candlelight dinners mark Valentine's Day. But what marks marriage, day after day, year by year, decade upon decade? The Burlington Free Press asked four couples who together have been married a combined 240 years what it takes to make a marriage work. We'll let the pros do the talking:

VIRGINIA AND ROBERT HOWRIGAN, FAIRFIELD, 60 YEARS

Virginia and Robert Howrigan will celebrate their 60th anniversary Thursday. They are retired farmers who live in Fairfield. The couple worked together on their dairy farm and raised nine children.

Robert Howrigan will turn 90 in May; Virginia is 80. They met at a soda fountain in a St. Albans drugstore, where Virginia scooped ice cream. For the Howrigans, who were married on Lincoln's birthday, Valentine's Day was never a significant event. "Mostly we remember Lincoln," Virginia said.

Robert milked cows the morning the couple were married at a church in St. Albans. The work went on and on: The Howrigans stopped doing farm chores four years ago. Tolerance, patience and perseverance are central to the marriage's longevity, Virginia said.

"You make the best of what you have and keep going," Virginia said. "You get up in the morning and go with the flow. You know what you've got to do. You don't have to look around for work. There's plenty of it everywhere." Robert and Virginia and their children ate all their meals together. Together, the couple talked everything over.

"We were able to keep family together," she said. "All our decisions were joint. We do