

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:

Thank you for this opportunity to talk about this issue.

I am not complaining. I have a wonderful life here in Idaho that I could never afford in California. These are the facts of my life.

I am a 46-year-old, divorced female with no children. I am a high school graduate. I am not a minority. I am an American citizen.

Like a lot of Idahoans, I work full time for a low wage. I make \$13.00 an hour without employee benefits. I buy my own health insurance and contribute an inadequate amount to my own IRA. I do own a modest town home in downtown Boise. I have almost paid off my dream vehicle, a medium-sized pickup truck. My monthly expenses are about \$1,200 a month. This does not include groceries, gas, clothes or entertainment. I commute seven miles (round trip) to my job at Hewlett-Packard five days a week. I eat my lunch at my desk. I love my job. I love my home, I love my truck, I love Idaho!

Last year it was really tight. I kept my home heat at 60-65 degrees during the winter. This year it is impossible for me to make ends meet. The cost of gas and food has increased way more than my salary. I am using my credit card, that I had just paid off, to put gas into my truck. Dumb, but I got to have gas to make my life work. We all do!

I have a small "carbon footprint." And [now I am told to conserve!]

I looked at taking the bus, Valley Ride. It would take me one-and-a-half hours to take the bus to work and one-and-a-half hours to go home at the end of the day. My time is too valuable. I would rather go to the gym, ride my bike on the greenbelt, play with my dog, mow my lawn, have a beer with my buds.

I am furious! There is no reason on God's green earth why this should be happening to Americans. We are the greatest nation on earth with vast resources that our Government has taken from us with their [moratoriums]

Manmade global warming is nothing more than a leftist power grab and I am sick of elitists telling the rest of us how to live our lives! I want to take care of myself, not the government! What we have going on [right

now] is national economic suicide! I appreciate all you try to do for Idaho and the citizens of the United States. You have been a wonderful Senator. I am very excited about having nuclear power plants in Idaho. And I look forward to our State creating more businesses, jobs and revenue by using our state's renewable resources. Any chance Idaho has some coal or oil we could exploit? Free market is the way to go for all of America's needs!

SUZANNE, Boise.

I am sure you have received thousands of responses by now, and I am sure I am not the first to come to you with these concerns and ideas. I just hope that adding our "story" to the mix, might add some additional light to the situation.

Who we are: We are a family of six. Our children are 5 years and almost 3-year-old triplets. We own/operate a dairy in Kuna.

Each trip into Boise costs us about \$10 (round trip) in gas. I used to do all my shopping at Walmart/Costco/Winco since the price of groceries are cheaper there than at our Kuna Paul's store. However, adding in the cost of gas now makes tasks as simple as grocery shopping that much more expensive. We are trying to last up to 2 weeks in between shopping trips, just because of the cost of gas. We are eating more frozen foods and less fresh foods.

Trips to the zoo or park have been completely eliminated.

My husband and I have been volunteering at St. Luke's NICU for the last eight months, but have been finding it hard to justify spending the \$10 in gas each time we go, when we are struggling just to pay for the groceries each month.

At our dairy, the cost to feed our own livestock is astronomically high!! The past several months have all been negative income months due entirely to the cost of grains. As a dairy owner, the milk price is going to have to go higher if dairies are going to survive.

My suggestions: Abolish the ethanol subsidies. It is pushing our food prices higher and higher. The cost of grain to make foods or to feed the livestock (that then becomes our food) is pushing a lot of the grocery bills higher and higher. If we have to, we can start riding bikes, but I do not have much choice when it comes to feeding my family.

We need to become more self-sufficient for our own energy needs. We need to start drilling. We need to start pushing for more electric and hybrid cars. Could we even start a program that would help convert gas engines into hybrids??? I would gladly spend a couple thousand (probably would go on a credit card honestly) right now to convert our family vehicle into a hybrid!

Hopefully you have time to read this e-mail and if you did, thank you so much!

LESLIE.

I am cutting back on fuel and fertilizer as much as I can. But, as a person pushing seventy, being frugal and "making do" is no problem and the challenge can be rather enjoyable—a virtue, not a vice. This seems to not be the case with the "boomers" and their progeny. They do not want to do without and they look for simplistic answers from politicians to a complex issue.

This is what I have seen in my lifetime: A doubling of world population every 25 years; Rising standards of living in large areas of the non-Western European-North American world and rising demand for energy; Finite easily and cheaply accessible oil and gas reserves; Unmistakable evidence of serious environmental damage, in part due to profligate use of fossil fuels; The swing in my lifetime away from efficient affordable pub-

lic transportation and towards an emphasis on private motor transportation, truck haulage, and air travel; A reversal of conservation measures and the encouragement of alternative energy development began in the seventies.

There are no quick fixes. The feds and the states can embark on a serious program of conservation. They can see what the Europeans have done along these lines the past thirty years. They can get really serious about public transportation—especially rail—the most efficient way of moving freight and people on land. More efficient engines as well, and smaller vehicles.

Long term, we need a serious energy strategy that involves alternatives, renewables, and changing lifestyles.

Can it be done? It better be done, but it will take some real leadership on the national level.

CLEVE, Bonners Ferry.

Drill! Build new refineries! Stop cowering to the environmental special interests! Stop selling this country's sovereign nation down the tubes. Thank you for trying to do something about this crisis.

The opportunity to have an open dialog regarding high energy prices is a refreshing change. It is apparent to me that by opening this door you are comfortable in the understanding that elected officials serve the people interest and not vis-a-versa.

My family is struggling. The increases we are seeing in the cost of energy are directly affected "every" area of our life. We are a simple middle-class family. Prior to this last year, we had seen a steady increase in the cost of living. However the sharp rise over the last year has been so tremendous we have been forced cut way back.

Highlights from the previous 12 months: We have depleted our savings accounts; We have accepted food donations; We have removed a large majority of all non-essential expenses in the home; We are using the economic stimulus check to pay off our tax debt from last year.

Idaho's economy is not on an even par with California, Florida, New York or Washington D.C. Wages are substantially lower here. Yet the cost of living is skyrocketing. This is directly due to the higher energy costs. Currently we do not have an alternate source of power to move our industry. A gallon of milk or a dozen eggs are produced, processed and transported with the use of natural gas, coal and oil. These are the three primary resources used by industrial nations to sustain their viability.

We are losing our viability and limiting our innovation. If you take a look at Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs theory, you will see that human nature will move up or down based on whether the needs at a given level are being met. The cost of living is forcing our society to circle the wagons. People are spending money on food that, in some cases, has doubled. Basic services that were affordable in years past are not. Small businesses are suffering. Large businesses are losing the support of small businesses all of which has stalling economic growth. Stalled economic growth creates a cascading snowball pushing us closer and closer to the razor's edge. In our country, we have always been considered a nation of opportunity. We are falling backwards. Hope, vision, trust and growth are losing ground to Fear and Anger.

As the cost of fuel go up, manufacturers push their costs onto the markets and the markets just push those cost onto the consumer. Initially the manufacturers and markets do not feel a big squeeze because the consumer adjusts to the market. My wife spent about six months adjusting to the market before we gave up and drastically

changed our consumer spending habits. Please inform your fellow Senators that until energy cost go down you will see very little of my money coming in from consumer based taxes currently being levied because I refuse to buy "anything!" if I cannot supply shelter and food for my family.

You should warn your fellow Senators that the markets that lobby for their support are going to start screaming very soon, if they are not already, to take action. If the government is unwilling to move based on the requests of the people they server maybe they will move when the markets force them and the money generated from taxes starts to dry up.

There is a groundswell out here of people that will, out of necessity, organize to find ways to reduce cost without the help of government and without the need to rely on markets. Due to the lack of action by the government to allow for the explore from additional resources, both the government and the markets are going to see a major shift away from a consumer-based economy.

Reduction in the cost of energy plus a increase the investment in exploration plus increase the investment in alternate energy sources equals Sustainability, Growth, Innovation, Independence, Cost of living reduction, increased revenue.

Please also remember to remind your fellow Senators that "We the People" do not work hard to increase government revenue. We work hard to sustain and/or increase personal revenue.

SEAN, Boise.

I think this country is going to go down the tubes because no one will take action and are pandering to the extreme environmentalists. Why do we think that the rest of the world needs to take all the risks of oil drilling and we do not. Yes, eventually our country could probably adjust to the lack of oil we have now. But this happened way too fast and adjustments just cannot happen fast enough. We need to have our own supplies and we need to be taking steps now for our own supplies and to develop alternatives. I back 100% the drilling and even going to Alaska. Most people who have lived there or know about the pipelines say that there is almost no negative effects on wildlife. We cannot go on not taking our own risks for our own oil.

My husband and myself live in a community that is 30 miles from the nearest decent grocery store and jobs. We cannot afford to go out and buy a high gas mileage car right now, so what are we to do? We do not have a mass transit system available to us—not even a bus. I am 65 and never thought that I would see our life end the way it looks like it is going to end. The US has lost its supremacy in this world and we will soon be a second rate country, if not third world.

Thank you for asking common citizens their opinions. I do not know of anyone that agrees with what is happening and the burying of the heads in the sand. I hate what Pres. Bush has done to this country, but I am very afraid of where we will go under the extreme Democrats.

LESLEY.

My husband and I are both past retirement age, and we live for the most part on a fixed income, which we supplement by both of us working part-time. My husband is in very poor health, but he has to work in order for us to get by financially. The energy prices are having a great impact on everyone that we know. They have driven up the cost of everything. It does not matter what you buy—it costs more every time you go to the store. Our children live in the Logan, Utah area, the Boise area, and in Houston, Texas. We are now to the point where we cannot go to

watch our grandchildren's ball games, school programs, recitals, Church programs etc. We have older grandchildren, so there are show-ers, weddings, missionary farewells and reports. We have several family gatherings every year, and now we all feel that we cannot afford to travel. I know that you share our beliefs in the importance of the family and spending time together. It no longer is a matter of choice—we cannot afford to visit them, and they cannot afford to come home. When I went to Rigby this morning, gas was \$3.93. When I came home an hour later, it was \$4.05—a 12-cent raise, and we all know it is just going to continue to go higher. Utah Power has asked for a rate increase, and the cost of propane has increased along with gas prices. Our income will only cover so much expense no matter how much we try to cut back and cut out.

We support using our own oil—uncapping existing wells, drilling wherever there is oil, drilling in ANWR, and drilling offshore. We support nuclear energy. We do not support the manufacture and use of ethanol. Making ethanol has pushed corn prices out of sight, which has affected livestock prices, further increasing the cost of food. It takes too much energy to produce ethanol for it to be economically feasible. We have been sold the proverbial "bill of goods" where ethanol is concerned.

Thank you for everything that you are doing to try to solve the energy crisis. We appreciate your efforts very much.

GARY and JULIE, Rigby.

The gas prices have impacted our family significantly. We have three vehicles that we use for transportation. Since the price of gas has increased, we spend almost as much on gas as we do for a house payment. That is excessive! All of our transportation is to and from work and school, and running errand such as doctor appointment and getting groceries.

We have tried to cut down the car usage by car pooling and riding our bike when possible. This seldom works because our schedules seldom correspond with each other and they are not flexible enough to get them to work; we do not have a bus service out by where we live so that is not an option; we do not have a safe bike lane and/or sidewalks to ride our bikes without competing for space with other vehicles that drive 40 to 50 miles an hour even though the speed limit is 35. The meeting places for the Share A Ride Program, are in the opposite direction of where we need to be. We are prisoners of our economy. This is both by gas prices and no other safe alternative.

The money for gas has got to come from somewhere so we do not go to movies, out to eat, or camping. We have not ever been able to take a typical vacation because our occupations do not pay the type of salary that would support that lifestyle, so camping three times in the summer was our form of vacation. We do not fly anywhere or drive anywhere outside of Boise and Meridian. My husband's family lives in Pocatello, and it has been almost one year since we have visited them.

Everything has increased in price whether it is directly or indirectly related to rising gas prices. I now hang my clothes out on a clothesline instead of drying them in the dryer; I raise vegetables in the garden instead of supporting the farmer's market; I can anything and everything I can find that is extra produce; we do not use the air conditioning at all; we heat by burning wood in the fireplace. I am not sure how we are going to afford the gas to pay for us to go and cut our firewood for the coming winter.

All prices are increasing, businesses are failing, unemployment is at an all-time high.

It has hit the working class the hardest. The rich get richer and the poor get poorer. For my generation, I feel this is the beginning of our Depression for America. The sad thing is, I do not even see a glimmer of hope for things to change in the next 15 years. By then I will be old enough to retire . . . but retire to what?

Thank you for this opportunity to tell you how our family has been affected by the increase in fuel prices.

CATHY, Boise.

I am a [conservative voter] and applaud you for taking on this issue. Please do all you can to lobby your colleagues to vote for some of the following ideas to ease the energy crisis.

1. Open offshore areas for oil drilling
2. Begin oil shale operations
3. Drill in Alaska
4. Increase our own production of natural gas
5. Approve CLEAN coal plants
6. Approve CLEAN nuclear plants
7. Make it easier to get permits for oil refineries and drilling

Also, please work with Congress to limit the ability of conservation groups to file lawsuits against the seven items above. I am very tired of individuals and fringe groups bogging down our great country with their "legal terrorism."

Finally, stop using corn for ethanol; investigate hydrogen or electric instead.

ERIC.

First of all, I am 50% whole bodied disabled and was not able to live on our Social Security system so I am working at what the doctors say I not do in order to make my payments on my bills. Now the gas is over \$4.00 a gallon and this makes it worse because I am spending most of my money buying gas to get to work. This also drives up all the basic needs such as food on the table also. All extra activities are not happening period. This is making it difficult when my pay is only \$1.15 more an hour than what I made almost 20 years ago. Prices on everything including government must slow down so my wages can catch up. By the way, gas 20 years ago was far less than \$0.60 a gallon then. Go figure.

DOUG, Rupert.

NOMINATION OF REPRESENTATIVE HILDA SOLIS TO BE LABOR SECRETARY

Mr. MCCAIN. Mr. President, HILDA SOLIS has a remarkable story of self-determination as the daughter of Mexican and Nicaraguan immigrants who has been nominated by the President to serve as our nation's 25th Secretary of Labor. Congresswoman SOLIS was the first from her family to graduate from college and then went on to earn a master's degree in public administration from the University of Southern California. In 1992, she began her career in public service when she was elected to the California State Assembly and has represented California's 32nd District in the House of Representatives since 2000.

These are very tough economic times for all Americans. Today, the Federal Reserve Chairman, Ben Bernanke, said that he doesn't expect our labor markets to improve until 2011. We will see the end of this recession. However, as businesses fight to get back on their