

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 showers, 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

feet, we need to be preparing and training workers who have lost their jobs so they can continue to succeed in our world economy. I hope that Congresswoman SOLIS, once confirmed, will make as a top priority the availability of adequate worker training programs for our labor force.

While I know that Congresswoman SOLIS and I have divergent views on many of the issues she will consider as Labor Secretary, I am proud of her nomination as the first Latina to be considered for the position of Secretary of Labor. I do believe her nomination could have been considered sooner if the Congresswoman had not submitted documents to the Committee and the House of Representatives that included errors and omissions, specifically regarding her position as Treasurer of a not-for-profit lobbying firm. However, I am pleased that the nominee worked with the Committee to correct these errors and omissions and hope this spirit of cooperation continues between Congresswoman SOLIS and the Congress when she serves as a member of the new administration.

ADDRESS BY THE PRESIDENT DELIVERED TO A JOINT SESSION OF CONGRESS ON FEBRUARY 24, 2009—PM 8

The PRESIDING OFFICER laid before the Senate the following message from the President of the United States, together with an accompanying report; which was which was ordered to lie on the table.

To The Congress of the United States:

I've come here tonight not only to address the distinguished men and women in this great chamber, but to speak frankly and directly to the men and women who sent us here.

I know that for many Americans watching right now, the state of our economy is a concern that rises above all others. And rightly so. If you haven't been personally affected by this recession, you probably know someone who has—a friend; a neighbor; a member of your family. You don't need to hear another list of statistics to know that our economy is in crisis, because you live it every day. It's the worry you wake up with and the source of sleepless nights. It's the job you thought you'd retire from but now have lost; the business you built your dreams upon that's now hanging by a thread; the college acceptance letter your child had to put back in the envelope. The impact of this recession is real, and it is everywhere.

But while our economy may be weakened and our confidence shaken; though we are living through difficult and uncertain times, tonight I want every American to know this:

We will rebuild, we will recover, and the United States of America will emerge stronger than before.

The weight of this crisis will not determine the destiny of this Nation. The

answers to our problems don't lie beyond our reach. They exist in our laboratories and universities; in our fields and our factories; in the imaginations of our entrepreneurs and the pride of the hardest-working people on Earth. Those qualities that have made America the greatest force of progress and prosperity in human history we still possess in ample measure. What is required now is for this country to pull together, confront boldly the challenges we face, and take responsibility for our future once more. Now, if we're honest with ourselves, we'll admit that for too long, we have not always met these responsibilities—as a Government or as a people. I say this not to lay blame or look backwards, but because it is only by understanding how we arrived at this moment that we'll be able to lift ourselves out of this predicament.

The fact is, our economy did not fall into decline overnight. Nor did all of our problems begin when the housing market collapsed or the stock market sank. We have known for decades that our survival depends on finding new sources of energy. Yet we import more oil today than ever before. The cost of health care eats up more and more of our savings each year, yet we keep delaying reform. Our children will compete for jobs in a global economy that too many of our schools do not prepare them for. And though all these challenges went unsolved, we still managed to spend more money and pile up more debt, both as individuals and through our Government, than ever before.

In other words, we have lived through an era where too often, short-term gains were prized over long-term prosperity; where we failed to look beyond the next payment, the next quarter, or the next election. A surplus became an excuse to transfer wealth to the wealthy instead of an opportunity to invest in our future. Regulations were gutted for the sake of a quick profit at the expense of a healthy market. People bought homes they knew they couldn't afford from banks and lenders who pushed those bad loans anyway. And all the while, critical debates and difficult decisions were put off for some other time on some other day.

Well that day of reckoning has arrived, and the time to take charge of our future is here.

Now is the time to act boldly and wisely—to not only revive this economy, but to build a new foundation for lasting prosperity. Now is the time to jumpstart job creation, re-start lending, and invest in areas like energy, health care, and education that will grow our economy, even as we make hard choices to bring our deficit down. That is what my economic agenda is designed to do, and that's what I'd like to talk to you about tonight.

It's an agenda that begins with jobs.

As soon as I took office, I asked this Congress to send me a recovery plan by President's Day that would put people

back to work and put money in their pockets. Not because I believe in bigger Government—I don't. Not because I'm not mindful of the massive debt we've inherited—I am. I called for action because the failure to do so would have cost more jobs and caused more hardships. In fact, a failure to act would have worsened our long-term deficit by assuring weak economic growth for years. That's why I pushed for quick action. And tonight, I am grateful that this Congress delivered, and pleased to say that the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act is now law.

Over the next 2 years, this plan will save or create 3.5 million jobs. More than 90 percent of these jobs will be in the private sector—jobs rebuilding our roads and bridges; constructing wind turbines and solar panels; laying broadband and expanding mass transit.

Because of this plan, there are teachers who can now keep their jobs and educate our kids. Health care professionals can continue caring for our sick. There are 57 police officers who are still on the streets of Minneapolis tonight because this plan prevented the layoffs their department was about to make.

Because of this plan, 95 percent of the working households in America will receive a tax cut—a tax cut that you will see in your paychecks beginning on April 1st.

Because of this plan, families who are struggling to pay tuition costs will receive a \$2,500 tax credit for all four years of college. And Americans who have lost their jobs in this recession will be able to receive extended unemployment benefits and continued health care coverage to help them weather this storm.

I know there are some in this chamber and watching at home who are skeptical of whether this plan will work. I understand that skepticism. Here in Washington, we've all seen how quickly good intentions can turn into broken promises and wasteful spending. And with a plan of this scale comes enormous responsibility to get it right.

That is why I have asked Vice President BIDEN to lead a tough, unprecedented oversight effort—because nobody messes with JOE. I have told each member of my Cabinet as well as mayors and governors across the country that they will be held accountable by me and the American people for every dollar they spend. I have appointed a proven and aggressive Inspector General to ferret out any and all cases of waste and fraud. And we have created a new Web site called recovery.gov so that every American can find out how and where their money is being spent.

So the recovery plan we passed is the first step in getting our economy back on track. But it is just the first step. Because even if we manage this plan flawlessly, there will be no real recovery unless we clean up the credit crisis that has severely weakened our financial system.