

are committed daily in Cuba, and to reaffirm unconditional support for the Cuban people who seek to break free from the shackles of the Castro tyranny.

THE PRICE OF WAR IN AFGHANISTAN

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Washington (Mr. McDERMOTT) for 5 minutes.

Mr. McDERMOTT. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to ask the American people to consider the price of the Afghan war, not only its unsustainable financial toll, but also the psychological cost to those on the front lines as well as those here at home, because this war, fought on the ground by a tiny percentage of Americans and largely ignored by the greater majority of us, nonetheless, has had powerful effects on each one of us.

In the past 3 months, there have been several high-profile incidents in Afghanistan that have forced us to reflect on the mental state of the men and women who put their lives on the line every day in Afghanistan.

In January, four soldiers in combat gear urinated on three bloodied corpses. In February, American soldiers burned copies of the Koran, which triggered 6 days of riots across Afghanistan. And this month, a soldier went on a murderous rampage in Kandahar province, killing 16 Afghans, including nine children. These events have shocked us, but they remain remote to most of us.

I want to talk today about what this war has done to our national psyche, that is, our sense of connectedness to one another and our sense of mutual obligation to this country.

The war in Afghanistan is being fought primarily by a small group from the Army and Marine Corps who serve multiple tours because we do not have adequate replacements for them. This has allowed most of us to disengage ourselves from the terror, the suffering and despair endured by those who are sent to war. Retired General Robert Scales wrote in the Washington Post last week: "We are fighting too many wars with too few soldiers." He's right.

More than 100,000 of our soldiers have been deployed three or more times since 9/11. Many of them are overused, exhausted, demoralized, and unprepared to come home to a country that has little personal investment in the war and does not fully understand its objectives. Is it fair or reasonable to send these courageous citizens to war four, five, and six times?

I was a doctor who treated combat soldiers returning from Vietnam, and I know that no one escapes multiple tours of combat duty without trauma. There have been almost 100,000 new cases of PTSD among our servicemembers since 9/11. The military suicide rate in some months has been higher than the casualty rate. We are wrong

to subject such a small group—fewer than one-half of 1 percent of all Americans—to such a disproportionate share of the consequences of war.

I felt this way in 2007 when I supported fellow veteran Charlie Rangel's bill, declaring it an obligation of every American citizen between the ages of 18 and 42 to perform a 2-year period of national service either as a member of the national forces or in civilian capacity that promotes national defense in times of war. Several weeks ago, my constituent, Sergeant William Stacey, became the 399th resident from Washington State to be killed since the war on terror began following 9/11. In his letter, which soldiers write in case they die, Sergeant Stacey wrote:

My death did not change the world, but there is a greater meaning to it. There will be a child who will live because men left the security they enjoyed in their home country to come to his.

□ 1010

If more Americans sacrificed their time and energy toward our country's ideals, perhaps Sergeant Stacey's dream of a more peaceful Afghanistan could become a reality.

As the overwhelming majority of the Nation stands by while 23-year olds die in a distant war zone, our national psyche has been frayed, and our shared identity is diminished. We have become immune, immune to the traumas of war, and we have lost our sense of common purpose.

In the Vietnam War, when everybody served, you had no immunity because everybody knew somebody, but now it's not that way. We must face the true cost of war on not only our soldiers, but ourselves and our ideals.

USING USA ENERGY TO MEET OUR NEEDS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. MURPHY) for 5 minutes.

Mr. MURPHY of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, when GenOn announced it would close its coal-fired power plant in Elrama, in my district in southwestern Pennsylvania, my community didn't just lose the 50 remaining jobs; it also lost a vital component to economic growth: affordable energy.

We should be cleaning up, not shutting down these power plants, but new regulations aimed squarely at coal, oil, and natural gas are making it harder for families to get by, for manufacturers to prosper, and making it more difficult for our country to become energy independent.

The Elrama plant is one of 57 nationwide slated to close because of a multitude of costly and unworkable EPA rules set to take effect over the next 5 years. Already utilities are preparing to retire almost 10 percent of coal power in the country. That's 25 megawatts of energy that supports 18.8 million homes.

That lost capacity, which is five times greater than what the EPA predicted it would be, is why the North American Electric Reliability Corporation is warning of blackouts and service disruptions.

The EPA's new coal regulations will cost the economy \$184 billion and 1.4 million jobs in mining, transportation, manufacturing, and power generation. Of course, the expense will be passed along to consumers. Families in my State could see about \$400 more a year in their electric bills.

And it begs the question, is the President trying to make good on his promise to bankrupt utilities that use coal?

These new costs would come at a time when higher oil prices already mean families are paying \$2,400 more per year for gasoline than they were just 3 years ago. And if gasoline approaches \$5 a gallon, the average family will pay over \$3,000 more per year. That's a couple of months worth of groceries, or college loans, or payments on a new car.

Unfortunately, instead of increasing oil supplies to bring down prices, domestic oil production on Federal lands has fallen 13 percent in the last year. The President said we have only 2 percent of the world's proven reserves, conveniently overlooking the technically recoverable oil that is under lock and key in the gulf and the shale oil States. We have more oil reserves—800 billion barrels—than Saudi Arabia.

By the way, that means for a family that makes less than \$10,000 a year, they'll be spending 81 percent of their income on energy. For a family that makes between \$10,000 and \$30,000 a year, they'll be spending 24 percent of their income on energy.

And for every dollar of gasoline, 76 cents is tied up in crude oil. To bring down the price of gas, we don't need higher taxes on oil companies or penalties on speculators. What we need to do is send signals to the world that the United States is serious about using North American energy. We can start with building the Keystone pipeline.

Now, many of my colleagues argue that we can count on plentiful natural gas to replace the demand for coal and oil. But while deposits are being unlocked from the Marcellus shale and the Utica shales with new fracturing technologies, natural gas is also threatened with costly overregulation. Eight different Federal agencies are there to stop it. The EPA, the Departments of the Interior, Energy, Transportation, and Agriculture, the Centers for Disease Control, the Army Corps of Engineers, and the Securities and Exchange Commission are all working on new regulatory burdens.

One national energy organization predicts an EPA natural gas regulation for well sites specifically written to combat "global warming" will cut shale gas drilling by between 31 and 52 percent. That means higher energy bills to heat our homes.

With our know-how and resources in coal, natural gas and nuclear, America

can still become an energy-independent Nation. That's why I introduced an all-of-the-above energy plan that wouldn't raise taxes, borrow from China, or buy from OPEC. The Infrastructure Jobs and Energy Independence Act, or H.R. 1861, expands safe offshore oil and gas exploration, creates over a million new jobs annually, and launches \$8 trillion in economic output. It dedicates a portion of its up to \$3.7 trillion in new Federal oil and gas revenues for investments in rebuilding our aging infrastructure, power generation, and grid modernization, and helps put us on a path to energy independence.

And rather than shutting down coal-fired power plants, my bill invests in the kind of cutting-edge technology being developed at the National Energy Technology Laboratory to clean up coal.

So we can either continue to build the wealth of OPEC countries that use our money to fund terrorism, nuclear weapons, and unfriendly policies, or build jobs here at home with energy independence. We can let OPEC pick the winners and losers, or make the USA the winners again. I choose the USA.

We have the energy resources to unleash prosperity, but first and only if the Federal Government gets out of the way. The Federal Government should be a partner in prosperity, not build bureaucracies and barriers to stop our energy independence and hurt the American family.

ENDING OUR DEPENDENCE ON FOREIGN OIL

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. QUIGLEY) for 5 minutes.

Mr. QUIGLEY. Mr. Speaker, everyone in Washington is trying to arrive at the same destination. We seek to end our dependence on foreign oil, a dependence that endangers our environment, hurts our economy, and weakens our national security.

Importantly, there is a right way to get there. That includes cracking down on oil speculators, ending Big Oil handouts, investing in public transportation and green energy, and increasing corporate average fuel economy standards.

There's also a wrong way: ransacking our coastlines for oil. But you don't have to take my word for it. You can take a page from the history books on this one. For 8 years under the previous administration, the number of oil leases on public lands almost tripled. It didn't help gas prices, which doubled in 2008, and it didn't make us energy independent.

Why not?

The simple fact is the U.S. has less than 3 percent of the world's oil reserves. No matter how much we drill in the U.S., that number is not expected to change. We will never have enough oil to satisfy domestic demand for energy. After all, we currently use 25 percent of the world's oil, and we will

never have enough to sufficiently impact prices on the world market.

The U.S. Energy Information Administration has said as much, noting that increases in U.S. domestic production could be neutralized by a corresponding decrease in production among international oil producers, namely, OPEC.

What's really to blame for high gas prices? Is it a lack of domestic production of oil?

Ken Green, a resident scholar with the conservative American Enterprise Institute, doesn't think so. Ken said:

The world price is the world price. Even if we were producing 100 percent of our oil, we probably couldn't produce enough to affect the world price of oil.

Well then, who's really to blame for high gas prices? Is it this administration?

Michael Canes, the former chief economist for the oil industry's American Petroleum Institute, says otherwise:

It's not credible to blame the Obama administration's drilling policies for today's high prices.

What's really to blame for high gas prices is excessive speculation by entities that have no consumption interest in the underlying commodities and that profit by doing nothing more than forecasting price trends.

Our primary focus should be on countering the growing impact of energy speculation rather than simply promoting the oil industry's priorities of increasing domestic drilling.

Experts, including oil industry officials and investment firms, estimate that excessive oil speculation could be inflating prices by up to 30 percent. But increasing domestic drilling would impact prices by only about 1 percent, and that would happen only after a decade or more.

So then where do we go from here?

We learn from those who are reaping the economic benefits of transitioning to development within a booming green industry, countries like India and China.

Right now, in this Chamber, we neglect to consider a host of incentives for international and domestic investment in renewable energy production. Just last week a measure failed to pass the Senate that would have extended production tax credits for wind, solar, and the like.

□ 1020

At a time when we're rolling back, governments in Southeast Asia are refining targets for renewable energy expansion, extending subsidies, and dangling tax breaks. This does not a domestic competitive advantage make, and, frankly, we're better than that.

Gas prices are still below the peak they reached under the previous administration in 2008; crude oil is at \$107 a barrel today compared to \$145 a barrel back then. But listening to the news, you'd have a hard time believing these cold, hard facts.

Even if we were to drill a hole everywhere in the country we know to have

oil and drain out every drop of proved reserves, we would have just enough to last us 1,094 days, just 3 years. That trickle won't ease gas prices.

Raising average fuel efficiency for cars to 60 miles per gallon by 2025 would reduce gasoline consumption by 2.8 million barrels per day by 2030. A combined investment in more efficient cars and trucks, cleaner fuels, and more transportation options for Americans could cut our oil imports in half by 2030. The administration is currently developing the next phase of standards covering vehicles sold through the model year 2025, a strong and laudable goal.

We can and must end our dependence on foreign oil, a dependence that endangers our environment, hurts our economy, and weakens our national security. We can and must do better.

TAYLOR TOWNSEND

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Mississippi (Mr. HARPER) for 5 minutes.

Mr. HARPER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to acknowledge the work that Taylor Townsend, a 19-year-old Mississippian and the reigning Miss Mississippi College, is doing to eradicate human trafficking.

Taylor is passionate about the worldwide problem of human trafficking, which has lured millions of people into forced labor. Taylor Townsend is lending her support for the Blue Heart Campaign to bring awareness to human trafficking and the exploitation of people, especially children and teenagers.

In addition to her work in building awareness worldwide with the Blue Heart Campaign, Taylor Townsend has been offering her support in the great State of Mississippi. She has promoted the passage of two bills pending before the Mississippi Legislature and is involved in educational efforts bringing awareness to Mississippians.

Mr. Speaker, young people like Taylor Townsend who volunteer their time to help make our country and world a better place should be applauded. They should give us great hope for the future.

MARCH 20, 2012—SECOND ANNIVERSARY OF THE AFFORDABLE CARE ACT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. COHEN) for 5 minutes.

Mr. COHEN. Mr. Speaker, I stand here in the same spot where I was about 2 years ago, March 23, 2010, to celebrate the passage of one of the most important acts that this body has ever passed: the Affordable Care Act.

On March 23, we will celebrate the 2-year anniversary of that landmark decision. Of course, next week the Supreme Court will hear arguments on whether the individual mandate is permissible or not. Let us hope that the Supreme Court will act according to the law.