

who watch all these crime programs on TV can't wait to become part of law enforcement. Here is the bad news: Westwood College's law enforcement degree is not accepted by any law enforcement agency in Illinois. It is not a legitimate college degree.

Well, we called Westwood because we have been through this with them before many times and said: If you don't tear up those papers right now and allow her mom and her to walk away from this, there will be a press conference out in front of your building tomorrow morning. They tore up the papers. But, sadly, many college students who went to Westwood didn't have that good result. The worst one I know of is a young lady living in the basement of her parents' home now, a graduate of Westwood with a law enforcement degree and \$90,000 of debt and nowhere to turn. She is in her late twenties and has nowhere to turn. That is the reality of what is happening out there in the real world.

We have a responsibility here, a responsibility to these students, these leaders of tomorrow, a responsibility when it comes to the reputation of education in our country to step in and police the for-profit schools that are not doing a good job, that are taking advantage of students and leaving them deeply in debt with worthless diplomas. It is not an issue where people jump up and say: Let's get down to the floor and join DURBIN on this one. It is just not that interesting to a lot of folks yet. I am afraid it will be. If this looming student debt crisis grows, there will be more and more tragic stories like the one I put in the RECORD today about Danielle Jokela.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Wyoming.

ENERGY POLICY

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, I rise to speak on the issue that is before us today on the floor of the Senate; that is, the issue of high gas prices.

I was at home in Wyoming and filled up again this weekend, as I do most weekends, and today the average price of gasoline, regular unleaded gasoline nationwide, is \$3.91 a gallon. That is about 20 cents more than it was a month ago.

People at home in Wyoming see the prices continue to go up week after week. High gasoline prices are causing hardships—hardships for American families and American businesses. When families pay more at the pump, they can't spend money on other goods and services. For families dealing with kids and a mortgage and bills, they know the specific impact as they fill their car or truck and see that price rise to the point where it is most, if not more, than \$100 to fill the tank. Also, when companies pay more for gasoline, they have less money to expand their businesses. That hurts job creation in this country.

Wyoming families and Wyoming businesses know this all too well because in Wyoming we drive longer distances than most Americans. The President also knows this, and that is why he continues to give speeches on energy. It is clear that the President is defensive on this issue. I have heard the speeches, and I say: Pay less attention to what he says and pay more attention to what he does.

The average price of a gallon of gasoline, regular unleaded gasoline, is over 100 percent higher than it was when President Obama took office. I will say that again. The price of gasoline is over 100 percent higher than it was when President Obama took office. It is clear that the President's policies are contributing to higher gas prices, but instead of changing course President Obama and Democrats in Congress are doubling down on bad policies and desperate schemes.

Here is an example. One Senate Democrat—someone across the aisle from me—said: Let's ask Saudi Arabia to produce more oil. That is exactly what he said. He said his solution is to ask the Secretary of State to ask Saudi Arabia to produce more oil. Now President Obama and Senate Democrats want to raise taxes on American oil production. So we are going to ask Saudi Arabia to produce more and yet raise taxes on those who are producing American oil. So the President and the Democrats want more oil from Saudi Arabia, and they also want to make it more expensive to produce American energy.

The legislation on the floor doesn't make sense, and the American people recognize that it doesn't make sense. Americans know that if you want less of something, you tax it more. They also know that if you want to increase the cost of something, you tax it more. Raising taxes increases the cost for consumers, and that is, in effect, what President Obama and Senate Democrats are doing with this legislation. They are proposing increasing gas prices by increasing taxes. Even the author of this legislation has said that "nobody has made the claim that this bill is about reducing gas prices."

So, then, why would President Obama want to increase gas prices 7 months before a Presidential election? Well, it appears to me it is because his political base fiercely opposes fossil fuels. Now that should not surprise anyone. We have seen this before. Of course, I am referring to the President's rejection recently of the Keystone XL Pipeline, bringing energy from Canada into the United States. The Keystone XL Pipeline would have created thousands of good-paying jobs for Americans. The President said no. The Keystone XL Pipeline would have facilitated oil production in Montana and in North Dakota. The President said no. The Keystone XL Pipeline would have increased supplies of oil from Canada. The President said no—to the point that the Prime Minister of

Canada actually went to China to ask if they would buy the energy from Canada if the United States is not interested.

So why would the President reject it? Well, because his political base has fiercely opposed the pipeline. Now the President wants to have it both ways. He would like to please his political base as well as the American public. That is why the administration wants to go hat in hand and ask Saudi Arabia to produce more oil. It is also why the President is considering plans to tap the Strategic Petroleum Reserve.

This will be the second time President Obama tapped the Strategic Petroleum Reserve. Last June, if you will recall, the President released 30 million barrels of oil from the Reserve. Prior to that, it had only been tapped twice for emergencies since 1975. So between 1975 and June of 2011, the Strategic Petroleum Reserve had only been tapped twice for emergencies. It was tapped in 1991 upon the outbreak of the Persian Gulf war, and it was tapped following Hurricane Katrina. In both instances those were real disruptions of the supply of oil to the United States.

But when President Obama tapped the Strategic Reserve last year, there was no substantial prospect of a supply disruption. His decision at the time was based on politics, as would be his decision to tap it now. That is why Jay Leno recently called the Strategic Petroleum Reserve President Obama's "Strategic Re-Election Reserve."

Well, my Republican colleagues and I think there are other ways to address high gas prices. The other thing is, when they tapped the Strategic Reserve last year and took out the 30 million barrels, they did not actually refill it, so that the Strategic Petroleum Reserve is not filled up right now. It is lower. Just to fill it back to where it should be, its baseline level, would cost actually almost \$1 billion more than they got when they sold the oil last year.

I believe there are things we should be doing and can do that will enhance, not jeopardize, our Nation's security and specifically our Nation's energy security. We understand the Strategic Petroleum Reserve is for emergencies, not political disasters; and we understand if we want more of something or if we want to lower the cost of something, we do not raise taxes on it. What we do is make it easier to produce the product. That is why my Republican colleagues and I support making it easier to produce American energy, and it is why we are asking the President to make it easier to produce American energy—not harder, not more expensive but easier.

A few weeks ago, we learned oil and gas production on Federal lands and waters is down. Specifically, we learned there was a 14-percent decrease in oil production on Federal public lands and waters from 2010 to 2011 and an 11-percent decrease in gas production from 2010 to 2011.

Again, the President has not made it easier, but he must make it easier to produce American energy. The President can begin by increasing the number of permits issued for exploration in the Gulf of Mexico. It is my understanding there are only 25 deepwater rigs active in the gulf right now. I understand 34 deepwater rigs were active in the gulf at this time in 2010. The administration needs to approve more permits and to do it immediately.

The President should also increase access to other offshore areas. He should provide access to offshore areas in the Atlantic and the Pacific Oceans. In November, the President proposed an offshore oil and gas leasing plan that amazingly excluded the Atlantic Ocean and the Pacific Ocean. He excluded areas off the coast of Virginia, even though both of the Senators from Virginia who are Democrats, as well as the Governor of Virginia who is a Republican, all support such exploration.

The President should also increase access to onshore areas. The President should open areas of Alaska, and we should support proposals to open ANWR. Both Senators—a Democrat and a Republican—and the Governor of Alaska strongly support opening ANWR for energy exploration. The President should too.

The President should also take steps to facilitate onshore production in the West. Specifically, the President should scrap new regulations requiring "Master Leasing and Development Plans." These regulations were put into place over 2 years ago by the Secretary of the Interior. It is unclear to me why the Secretary issued these regulations. They add more redtape, they cause more bureaucratic delay, and they slow down American energy production.

Of course, there are other regulations that are driving up the cost of American energy—specifically, the EPA's forthcoming tier 3 regulations that will affect America's refineries. A recent study shows this rule could increase the cost of manufacturing gasoline by 6 to 9 cents a gallon. This rule could also raise annual compliance costs for refineries by billions of dollars. And it will almost certainly increase the pain at the pump that is being felt by American families. To me this is unacceptable. The President should at the very least delay the issuance of this rule.

In addition to providing more access to Federal lands and waters and eliminating burdensome regulations, the President should address delivery bottlenecks. Specifically, he should address all the bottlenecks the Keystone XL Pipeline would relieve. Here, of course, I am referring to the 100,000 barrels of oil each day that Keystone would ship from Montana and North Dakota. That is right—homegrown American energy from Montana and North Dakota.

Right now there is not sufficient pipeline capacity out of North Dakota and Montana. Do you know how they

are getting the oil out of there? Well, they are shipping it on trucks and in trains, and that is a lot more expensive than shipping it by pipeline.

The Keystone XL Pipeline would reduce the cost of shipping American oil. In addition, the pipeline would ship about 700,000 barrels of oil a day from Canada. The Canadian oil would replace oil imports from OPEC and thus increase our Nation's energy security. Approving the Keystone XL Pipeline is an easy decision, and the President should make that decision immediately.

Again, the President must abandon his support for policies such as this legislation that is ahead of us today, which will only increase the pain at the pump. He must also abandon plans which will put our Nation's security further at risk. Instead, the President must make it easier to produce American energy. He should increase access to Federal public lands and waters, eliminate costly regulations, and approve the Keystone XL Pipeline.

It is my hope the President will take all of these steps and do so immediately so the American public does not continue to suffer the significant pain at the pump that continues to affect our country today.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alaska.

ORDER OF PROCEDURE

Mr. BEGICH. Mr. President, I would like to enter into a colloquy with my colleague from Louisiana.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. UDALL of Colorado). Without objection, it is so ordered.

ENERGY PLANNING

Mr. BEGICH. Mr. President, just as I expected, we have been in this back-and-forth show-and-tell on oil and gas issues instead of spending the time and working on a real energy plan, one that is important for not only my State, my colleague's State, but for the whole Nation. So we go back and forth, and it is politics as usual in this Chamber. We just heard a nice presentation by my colleague from Wyoming about how it is all the President's fault the prices are going up and all these other issues.

Let me just say this—and I know my friend from Louisiana knows this—in Alaska, there is a clear indication what we believe when it comes to energy prices. We have communities that pay \$9, \$10 a gallon for heating fuel. We understand when costs go up what happens to our economies in our rural communities.

We also are a producer of oil and gas, and we understand the potential and job opportunities. But this last week, when we started on this bill, I know my colleague and I were just two of four people who said, no; we are not moving on this bill because we expected exactly what is going on now. We are just doing a little show-and-tell, having a little argument back and forth, and in

another 24 hours or maybe 30 hours we will be off this bill and we will not have an energy plan.

When I go back home for our break, when I am talking to Alaskans—and I know the Senator will be talking to folks in Louisiana—they will complain about gas prices and heating costs and how much it costs to fill their cars or their RVs if they are trying to go somewhere on the weekends, and we have not done anything to make a dramatic change.

Of course, this idea of eliminating these incentives for the oil and gas industry I have opposed from day one, for a variety of reasons. One, if we are going to do real tax reform, then we should do a broader sweep, and no industry should be left off the table. Everyone should be part of the equation.

I have heard this from the industry—I know my colleague has heard this from the industry—that they are willing to be part of the bigger picture, but do not single them out because poll numbers say they are a demon of some sort or people do not like them. Let's talk about real tax reform. That is one debate.

The other debate is, if we really want an energy plan, then let's really do one. Let's focus on opportunities, and let's quit putting out pieces that one side puts down because it sounds good for their brochure, and then the other side puts one down. Let's really focus on something that will make a huge difference to this economy.

As I mentioned, in Alaska fuel is expensive in our rural communities for heating, and communities in Fairbanks, which is a very urban area, can pay upwards in the winter of \$1,000 or maybe more per month in heating costs, making their ability to survive very difficult.

As we work on these energy projects and what is important, let me put another thing in perspective from Alaska. People think in Alaska all we care about is oil and gas. Well, we do. It adds a lot of jobs. But we also care about renewable energy. I know I have been on the floor of the Senate talking about that. My colleague has been on the floor talking about renewable, alternative energy. It is all part of the equation, how to ensure we develop a plan. We diversify our energy resources, and then we deliver it for the betterment of this country and economically in order for us to survive.

In Alaska, for example, as we work on our oil and gas development, we are also moving forward on renewable energy. In our State, just about 25 percent of our energy production for use in the State is renewable energy, with the goal to be at 50 percent by 2025. We have a plan because we understand the value of it.

I want to show a chart I have in the Chamber, and then I know my colleague has comments, and we will probably go back and forth a little bit. But I want to show you this one chart.

When I came into office—and my colleague over here talked about ANWR. I