

Mr. THUNE. Through the Chair, I thank the leader for his answer. And I will be available. Mine are filed, and I would love to get them actually up.

Mr. ALEXANDER. Mr. President, I understand the majority leader may want to close, and I am happy to wait until he does, if he wishes.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I have been told we can do what we call wrap-up. It will take a minute or two. If my friend from Tennessee would withhold, we will rip right through this.

Mr. ALEXANDER. Mr. President, I will be delighted.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader is recognized.

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I now ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to a period of morning business, with Senators allowed to speak for up to 10 minutes each.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

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:

I am writing to you to help you see the impact that the recent rise in energy costs in this country has done to my family and many other hard working, middle class families in this great State. My wife of ten years and I have been blessed with four wonderful children and have chosen Idaho like our fathers before us as the place we want to raise our children. We love the outdoor recreation that this area affords us. We like to camp and enjoy many motorized recreational activities. We also live in an area where driving is needed for my employment and necessary for everyday survival. Idaho does not have a large amount of public transportation. Our population base does not support it. With many kids I drive a Suburban which is out of necessity, not indulgence as many may think. We need the four-wheel drive for

our winters here and the room for all of our children. It is a great way to have one vehicle for all seasons.

Please begin to drill offshore and in ANWR right away. I believe that with increased production and additional refineries we can make a lasting positive effect on the supplies of oil and gasoline in this country for generations to come. I also plead with you to build more nuclear plants which offer the most clean, high output energy we can produce. We are way behind in this area also considering other countries who generate most of their power with Nuclear Energy. I believe we should take care of our own needs and when I hear that we have more oil reserves than all of the Middle East combined I feel as though our enemies are within not without. If Congress is waiting for a time to act on this, it is now. If our reserves are available and silly legislation is keeping us from them, we need a new group of leaders who are willing to protect the interests of U.S. citizens over all else. Our country is strong but we need affordable energy to stay ahead of the game. I do not mean subsidized energy, for that will only be paid in taxes instead of at the pump. Increase the supplies and sell it to us, and restrict sales to other outside countries. Allow less regulation on refineries, and drilling rigs to promote U.S. companies involvement in increasing the supplies needed now.

SCOTT, Idaho Falls.

I do not need to tell you a story—they are all the same everywhere. We need to drill in the United States now. We are crippled by our own inaction. The longer we do nothing the longer there will be no relief in sight for high fuel and natural gas prices. We have not seen the worst I am sure. We also need to build oil refineries, nuclear power plants, liquefy coal and expand wind farms. We need to stop diverting precious farm land to ethanol production. Ethanol has turned out to be a huge, wasteful mistake. It uses far too many non-renewable resources to produce a gallon. The net effect is nothing in terms of reducing our dependence on foreign oil and look how it has affected the price of food and will continue to do so. To summarize: Drill here, drill now, pay less. Thank you sir for asking Idahoans for their opinion.

PAM, Homedale.

I listen every day to the news, telling me how much oil prices rose overnight and how much of an increase I will expect to see at the pump. Each time I hear a one cent or two cent rise, I panic. Not for myself, but for my family. My parents own a ranch in small town Idaho, where fuel prices exceed even our big city imaginations.

I wonder how they will afford to fill the tractors to plow fields to make the corn that our nation loves to consume. I wonder how they will be able to haul the cows to market in order to sell them for pennies, barely enough to cover the fuel of hauling them.

Then I hear the government saying they should switch from diesel trucks to smaller cars . . . I have never seen a hybrid that can pull a stock trailer with 12 cows. I hear the government say no more drilling in Alaska, yet they also say we will run out of oil soon. I listen to economists say that our economy is on the downfall. Gas prices rise, food prices rise, Idaho minimum wage stays the same, they continue to develop on the farmland that could provide food for cheaper prices. What are you doing in Washington that is helping middleman America? Nothing and, by doing so, you are killing the America dream one gas pump at a time.

You ask for opinions, but where's the change? By allowing oil companies to monopolize the industry, the American people have no way of overcoming the fuel shortage.

Ways you can help:

Open oil reserves in Alaska.

Put a price cap on the cost of fuel, forcing lower profit margins for big business oil companies.

Provide an incentive for creating alternate fuel sources that can meet the needs of ALL Americans (including farmers and ranchers).

Make hybrid cars more affordable and give incentives to those who want to purchase one.

Stop giving economic stimulus checks for \$600 to the richest and only \$300 to the poor/middleman. The middle American needs the \$600 more than the person that made \$30,000 last year.

TERRA.

The only real solution to high energy prices is to consume less. I am using less diesel myself by planning trips carefully, car-pooling, walking and biking. I see many others in Boise doing the same. I support a higher federal tax on carbon-producing energy sources, with the revenue used to support rail shipping and travel and transit.

MARILEE, Boise.

Wow, it almost sounds like you are running a commercial for the oil and gas or the nuclear industry. Yes, energy price increases have hurt all Americans, but part of the blame lies with the oil/gas and nuclear industry as well as the average Joe, who have continued to buy gas-guzzling vehicles, buy huge homes that are 40-60 miles from their work location. The oil and gas industry has done little to expand capacity and have repeated huge profits in recent history.

I have a diesel pickup that rarely moves, only when pulling the horse trailer or hauling the flat bed trailer to move hay, etc. I use coupons at the store whenever possible because of the rising food costs, and we have cut back on going out to dinner, movies, etc.

But drilling oil in the Arctic or off the coast is not going to solve the problem; the Alaska Pipeline was supposed to solve the oil crises when it was built.

Every day I commute from Nampa to Boise. I wish I could find someone to commute with or work from home, but the work just does not allow it. But I know lots of people speeding done the highway, who are driving alone in their cars to the same work location, and Idaho has done virtually nothing to conserve fuel, no HOV lanes, no rapid transit, metered on ramps, fact is the Idaho legislature is doing everything they can to prevent finding ways to conserve previous recourses and the U.S. Congress has done little to help. Congress has repeatedly voted not to increase the average fuel economy of vehicles until recently or assist with mass transit projects. Our rail system is falling apart, and Congress is not helping. Moving products by rail is one of the most economical ways to move material.

Yes, we need to get a handle on high fuel prices, but the best way is to reduce demand. I would support limited drilling for oil and gas, and development of nuclear energy but relaxing regulations is not the way, we need to ensure lots of oversight to make sure it is done right. I have seen hundreds of dead migratory birds caught in oil overflow ponds at drilling sites. I have witnessed the mining industry use toxic waste product as a soil binder on county roads. I have seen companies contracted to build interstate highways steal sand and gravel from the U.S. government, so I have no faith in industry.

So, please, find a real solution that works. Thanks.

ROB, Nampa.

I am writing in regards to your request on how the energy prices have affected our

household. It is hitting us hard, my husband works construction and is not getting the hours that he got last year so we are on a lower budget than ever. We used to do a little traveling, not far but weekend trips to livestock shows and to see friends, but now a trip to the grocery store is about all we get to do. No quick trips to the store, if we need something it waits until we have a good list. We used to eat out a couple times a week since we both work, and that does not happen often either anymore. We have sold all but a handful of our animals (South African Meat Goats and dairy goats) due to what the feed increases are.

The other thing that is amazing to us is that, in 1991, when we bought a Geo Metro, it got 60 mpg easily. Why is it that the manufacturers cannot do that now unless it is a "hybrid". If they could do it 17 year ago, what is the problem now? This is just my 2 cents.

LAURI, *Blackfoot.*

Thank you for asking for our input. The energy crisis is hitting our family particularly hard because of the slowdown in the economy. I am a self-employed architect, and, though we had a good year last year, the slowdown has brought our firm to a standstill. I share this because as the fuel prices rise, they affect every sector of our economy. Because our work has decreased, this means even more money needs to go to higher fuel and utility costs, money which we do not have right now.

I suggest that instead of Congress blaming the President for not having an energy policy that they look themselves in the mirror and ask themselves why they continue to vote in such a way that keeps us in bondage to oil from overseas. If Congress could address this one issue in a unified manner, maybe then their job approval rating would not be lower than the President's job approval rating as it is right now.

The bottom line is this: we must become energy independent from countries that support terrorism and are not in the best interests of the US. This means increasing US Oil drilling, production, refining, distribution, and increasing our research (working with Oil companies) to create alternatives to oil to run our country: such as hydrogen fuel cells, electric hybrids, etc. We must be able to drill in ANWR, oil shale in Colorado, Utah, and North Dakota; oil in Wyoming, oil in the Gulf, etc. At the same time, we need to transition out of using oil into other energy sources: nuclear, etc. No decision now is still making the decision to procrastinate. Procrastination is not an option.

BRIAN, *Boise.*

As an average American citizen making just under \$30,000 a year, skyrocketing gas prices are hurting the pocketbook. A full tank of gas is costing around \$55, which is just crazy to think. It is hard to imagine that just ten years ago gas prices in the state of Idaho averaged \$.96 a gallon. With a recession looming, the dollar growing weaker by the day, and unemployment rates on the rise it is a scary time for America. One solution that I can see to help with the gas prices is by suspending all sales of oil on the futures market. It is evident that forecasts by the speculators are driving the prices sky high. While investors are making money on these hedge fund investments, millions of Americans are suffering from paying these high prices. My solution would be to suspend all oil sales on the futures market for 3 to 6 months just to see what effect it would have. I believe it is the speculators that are driving the prices with their forecasting of a bad hurricane season or low supply of oil available they are the ones that are the problem.

They are the reason for the high prices of oil. By suspending the sale of oil on the futures market this would take them out of the equation and hopefully stabilize the prices. Even by just setting a limit on prices of oil sales per barrel would help stabilize the high prices of gasoline. Overall this is just another example of the rich getting richer and the poor getting poorer.

KENNETH.

I appreciate the opportunity to share how fuel prices are impacting our family. We are one of the many that own a diesel truck and have been impacted in a very big way. We purchased our diesel in the summer of 2005 and the price of fuel was \$2.11/gal and, as you know, today it is \$4.85/gal. That is a 130% increase in the cost of fuel! And to further compound the increase in cost, tighter emissions restrictions have been implemented. When we purchased our truck we were able to get 23 mpg and now that the ultra low sulfur fuel has been mandated our economy has dropped to 17 mpg. That is a 26% reduction in economy. As an engineer, I have a difficult time seeing the reasoning behind reducing the pollutants per gallon to only decrease mileage which ultimately increase the amount of pollutant per mile driven. This is very apparent on the new diesel trucks which are struggling to get 12 mph because of the emission controls. I have to ask the question is more than a 50% reduction in pollutants to justify the 50% reduction in economy. There is something that could be done right now and that is to relax the emission on diesel fuel so many families and the trucking industry would get an immediate increase in economy. We saw this during Katrina when the restrictions were lifted, our economy went back up to 23 mpg. Americans would see this relief immediately.

Our family has taken many measures to help offset the cost of the increasing fuel prices. We have basically parked our truck and become a one car family. We cancelled our kids swimming lessons and our spring/summer outdoor activities (camping, fishing, and hunting) to reduce the cost of fuel. In addition to limiting our driving we have stopped eating out (fast food and sit down) and other non-essential activities. We are fortunate to have planned extra budget for unaccounted costs, however, the increase fuel costs have taken all the extra and we as a family are extremely concerned that Congress is unwilling to act and make the difficult choice.

What has to happen to have Congress understand the simple principle of supply and demand? I, like many Americans, would like to be able to use a cleaner energy source but, until one is viable with a sound delivery network in place, we have to use the one we have and that is oil. And with the world's political climate, we also strongly believe it is a matter of national security to become less dependent on others for oil.

We strongly support expanding oil exploration and production in the United States. We also strongly support drilling in protected areas of Alaska. We agree with Ted Stevens when he points out that we as Americans would have that million barrels a day right now if President Clinton would not have vetoed the bill. People that are against drilling in Alaska simply do not understand how little an impact is has on the area. I challenge any person to visit the North Slope and see the operations there and see how exploration is done with little to no impacts with ice roads and the modern techniques. As an Idaho family, we strongly support all measures that will increase the domestic supply of oil. Thank you for your hard work in this effort.

CORTNEY and LORI, *Star.*

You asked for a line or two as to how the energy expenses have affected our lives. Certainly via the pocketbook, but equally in lifestyle and choices we make. I have reached a time in my life that I wanted to see some of our country that I have not yet been privileged to see. I wanted to drive across Montana and see the Big Horn Battlefield and on to the Black Hills. Drop into Nebraska to see family, then who knows where we ended up. Not now. I cannot afford to spend a thousand dollars or more on fuel. I realize that there are new automobiles that are more fuel efficient, only \$20,000-\$30,000+ but if we find ourselves upside down now on a Ford F150 truck that gets 15-18 MPG and nobody wants to buy it because it cannot get 30+ MPG you adjust. Trips now will consist of short radius excursions. Long distance is out. Such ventures are not economically possible. Fuel expense as a percentage of my income has risen notably. The more affluent folks can fill their tanks and shake it off. Some of us feel more than a pinch.

We also are associated with property under the current CRP program in Power County. Once CRP is removed and the land is resolved to be put into production it will take 3-4 years to prepare the ground for planting. All with no return income in return. Dry land farming has never been a high profit endeavor, but with the expense of the machinery and the 100+% increase in fuel, the small farmer will undoubtedly be out of business—out of business being the operative phrase here.

I worry for our country if we are indeed slaves to foreign oil and big money refuses to allow a phase-out. We are not a nation of sheep, or are we? We have the technology to fuel our autos using water for crying out loud. Why is not this technology in use? Who is stopping it from becoming an affordable reality? I have asked such questions before of our representatives and have never received a response. Maybe you could be the first. Thanks for listening.

DAN, *Idaho Falls.*

Unfortunately our family has had to cancel our vacation and any other fishing trips this year. In fact, we will not venture out to any of Idaho's beautiful cities this summer. The cost of fuel and food and our daughter's education have us questioning if we will be able to make ends meet. New technology for transportation will come too late for most working citizens. That is why we need to drill for oil now before the platforms have other countries flags flying.

RANDY.

The story is the failure of Congress to act in the interest of the American public. Congress continually is bowing to the environmentalist (how they became the majority is beyond me). The current gas price just shows another failure of government. There is an old saying "Lead, follow or get out of the way"—[it seems like our country is failing on all three.]

When you sit down at dinner tonight, think about the 85-year-old couple who retired 20 years ago and are drawing Social Security in the amount of \$980 month. How would you put food on the table, pay for health care, housing, transportation and enjoy your golden years. The story is the failure of Congress to act beyond personal interest.

DEAN.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

TRIBUTE TO BETSY J. KEELING

• Mr. CARPER. Mr. President, I am pleased to ask my colleagues to join