now and rising at an alarming rate, the time for excuses is over. It is time for action. Many of us saw this coming and have tried to expand supply here at home.

It is time for the majority to recognize this fact and show more concern for the American consumers than for the caribou.

## DEMOCRATIC SOLUTIONS ARE NEEDED FOR OIL CRISIS

(Mr. COURTNEY asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. COURTNEY. Mr. Speaker, yesterday on the ''Lee Elci Show,'' in New London, Connecticut, Bill from Groton called in while I was on and informed us that to lock in for next winter in Connecticut, it costs now $5.80 a gallon.

Mr. Speaker, we've heard a lot about the hardship of high gas prices. If home heating oil stays at those levels, there will be a catastrophe this winter in terms of keeping people alive because they cannot afford those prices. All of the proposals we've heard from the other side are going to take 20 years, even if it goes perfectly according to plan. People need relief now.

President Bush, with one stroke of the pen, could release oil from the Strategic Petroleum Reserve. We would have more oil into the market in 13 days. That's the type of short-term relief that consumers, particularly in the northern parts of this country, need if they are going to survive this winter.

We doubled the size of energy assistance in the Democratic budget. The Bush plan would have cut energy assistance incredibly given the fact that these prices are going through the roof. We need Democratic priorities to provide short-term relief and long-term solutions for the American consumer.

## AMERICA NEEDS TO DRILL NOW

(Mrs. DRAKE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Mrs. DRAKE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to express the frustration my constituents feel with a Congress that refuses to address the current energy crisis. I have heard they can't fill their tanks, they're not doing any extras, they're not going out to eat or to movies or on vacation. And last week, a young woman serving in Afghanistan asked me to make sure that gas is not $5 a gallon when she returns home.

Repeatedly, people have asked me to drill now. And yet with all this frustration and economic hardship, the Democratic leadership of this Congress refuses to bring legislation to the floor that addresses the number one concern of our constituents: increasing domestic supply now, dropping gas prices now while we move to the alternative energies of the future.

This week Congress will consider dozens of suspensions, a bill concerning the preservation of White House e-mails, a bill creating a national historic trail in New York, and a bill creating a new section of national wild and scenic rivers in Massachusetts. But nothing to lower gas prices.

## CONGRESS WILL CONTINUE TO FIND REAL SOLUTIONS INSTEAD OF CASTING BLAME

(Mr. ALTMIRE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. ALTMIRE. Mr. Speaker, Congress continues to take action and do everything we can to reduce the price of gas at the pump. Because of legislation this Congress passed last week, as of last week there are over 70,000 more barrels of oil per day every day that are going into the market instead of the Strategic Petroleum Reserve. And during the last week, the price of oil per barrel went down.

We also approved legislation that gives U.S. authorities the ability to prosecute anti-competitive conduct committed by international cartels like OPEC that manipulate the price of oil.

We passed legislation that would invest in biofuels rather than corporate welfare for Big Oil. Energy experts estimate that biofuel blends are keeping the price of gas approximately 15 percent lower than it would otherwise be right now.

This Congress has taken action to address the skyrocketing price of gas, and we will continue to find real solutions rather than pointing fingers and casting blame.

□ 1030

## AMERICANS HELD HOSTAGE IN COLOMBIA

(Mr. POE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. POE. Mr. Speaker, for the last 5 years, civilians Keith Stansell, Thomas Howes, and Marc Gonsalves have been held hostage and bound by chains in the jungles of Colombia. Their captors were the Communist thugs: FARC.

The three American captors lived in constant fear and squalor along with hundreds of other hostages, mostly Colombians. These three men were held longer than any other American citizens currently being held captive in the world.

They also had 5 years of their lives stolen from them. During the last 5 years, they were unaware of most world events, including the birth of Stansell's twins, the invasion of Iraq, Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, the Red Sox breaking the curse and winning the World Series, gasoline prices tripling, and the University of Texas defeating Southern Cal in the Rose Bowl for the National Championship.

FARC is an insurgent terrorist group that funds its activities by working with the drug cartels and kidnapping people and holding them for ransom.

But thanks to the people and the Government of Colombia, the three Americans and 20 others were rescued from the outlaws in a stealth, covert operation. We are glad the Americans are home, and our gratitude goes to the people of Colombia.

And that's just the way it is.

## ACKNOWLEDGE THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF STAND DOWN HOUSE

(Mr. KLEIN of Florida asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. KLEIN of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to acknowledge the contributions of an extraordinary organization in my congressional district: the Stand Down House.

The Stand Down House and its dedicated staff provide support and services for homeless veterans, including transportation, counseling, and job training. These honorable servicemen have fallen on hard times and need a place to stay and a chance to get their lives back on track.

The Stand Down House provides exactly that chance, and it is a lifesaver for many of our veterans.

Mr. Speaker, there are over 200,000 homeless veterans in America today, and up to 2,000 in Palm Beach County alone where I live.

We must never turn our backs on a single one of our servicemembers, and I commend the Stand Down House for serving those who have served our Nation.

## ENERGY

(Mr. PITTS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. PITTS. Mr. Speaker, in a story from The Hill newspaper yesterday, a Democrat staffer is quoted as saying House Democrats' strategy on the issue of skyrocketing gas prices is to ''drive small cars and wait for the wind.''

What a terribly insulting idea to the American people who continue to suffer as the price of gas soars over $4 a gallon.

The truth is, I know there are plenty of my colleagues on the other side of the aisle who would support reasonable bipartisan legislation to increase American production of oil here at home.

Unfortunately, the Democrat leadership controls the floor agenda, and the same article notes that Democratic leadership is terrified their Members might actually support legislation that would open up exploration in the deep waters off our coasts or in ANWR.

It's time for the Speaker to let the Members of this body do their job and represent their constituents' desires and drill for American oil.