

and have enforcement mechanisms to go after those who are ripping off consumers. At the Federal level, there is no oversight to protect consumers from this predatory pricing. That is why we need this Federal legislation now. No American should have to pay too much for gas for their automobile or to heat their home this winter because the oil companies are rigging the prices.

Our bill will give the President authority to take immediate action in the face of an energy crisis by declaring a national energy emergency. Our legislation mandates that the FTC, the Federal Trade Commission, for the first time ever will have to define price gouging and the criteria that makes up price gouging. It will also provide the FTC and the Department of Justice with the authority to investigate and prosecute those who engage in predatory pricing, from oil companies all the way down to the local gas stations, with an emphasis on those who profit most. This includes the gouging of gasoline prices, home heating oil, or natural gas.

Our legislation expands the Federal Trade Commission's authority to more aggressively pursue instances of market manipulation, such as geographic price setting or territorial restrictions imposed by refineries and those who are what they call "gaming the system." Our legislation empowers the Federal Government to impose tough civil penalties of up to triple damages of all excess profits on companies that have cheated consumers. It also imposes tough criminal penalties of up to \$100 million on corporations, and fines of up to \$1 million plus jail sentences for up to 10 years on individuals.

This bill will provide relief to farmers and small businesses paying skyrocketing energy and transportation costs, and expand the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program, LIHEAP, through fines paid by price gouging companies.

My bill will protect consumers from unfair gas prices and punish those who think that at a time of national tragedy it is the right time to rob Americans of their hard-earned money. It is the right thing to do for consumers and for our Nation's economy.

Look at what has been going on in the last few months, even before Hurricane Katrina. This is an article out of the Soo Evening News, a newspaper in my district. It is July 20, 2005. It is before the hurricane season. That day, in my home State of Michigan, gas prices went up 80 cents; eighty cents in one day, based upon rumor, fear, and speculation. You cannot tell me that no one is profiting excessively from America's fear.

Also, I found an article in the Washington Post with the headline, "Oil Prices Spike as Storm Nears. Jump of \$4.39 is Largest One-day Surge on Record." These are the reasons we must have this legislation. Let us pass the FREE Act.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. DEFAZIO) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. DEFAZIO addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. POE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. POE addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California (Ms. WOOLSEY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Ms. WOOLSEY addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Nebraska (Mr. OSBORNE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. OSBORNE addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PALLONE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. PALLONE addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. BURTON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. BURTON addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Ohio (Ms. KAPTUR) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Ms. KAPTUR addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. STEARNS) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. STEARNS addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Florida (Ms. CORRINE BROWN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Ms. CORRINE BROWN of Florida addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gen-

tleman from New York (Mr. HINCHEY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. HINCHEY addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

30-SOMETHING WORKING GROUP

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 4, 2005, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. MEEK) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Mr. Speaker, once again it is an honor to come before the House, and I want to thank the Democratic leadership for allowing us, the 30-Something Working Group, to come to the floor to talk about issues that are facing not only young Americans but Americans in general.

The 30-Something Working Group, as I have stated before, time after time, is a group of 30-something Members on the Democratic side of the aisle who meet every week. We come together on the issues that are facing Americans and discuss things that, A, are working or, B, things that are not working on behalf of the American people, and we try to bring that to the attention of our colleagues here in this House.

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I think it is important for us to not only be very aware of what is happening now in the action or inaction here in the Congress or here in this House. I think it is also important for us to realize that Hurricane Katrina survivors and those that are still in recovery are in need of a government that is willing to respond not only as it relates to saying, well, we passed the \$62.2 billion emergency appropriation, but to make sure that we never have to be placed in a position that we are in now, not this House, but the people affected by the storm, and not as it relates to the natural disaster.

We know that is an act of God and that will happen; but as it relates to governance, who dropped the ball or who did not respond in time, who did not get a letter because too many people lost their lives because the response was not what it should have been.

Mr. Speaker, it was not the hurricane that killed a number of people, people who have children lost at this point, that homes are devastated in New Orleans because of the flooding. It was not just the storm that made that happen. Governance broke down somewhere. Our reason for coming to the floor today is to not only share with our colleagues but to make sure that we are abundantly clear with the American people about the importance of having an independent commission out of the control of this House and out of the control of this Congress to allow appointments to take place, bipartisan, and independent.

Right now we have a partisan select committee that will be meeting sometime in the very near future, maybe tomorrow, organizing and trying to bring