

Well, enough of that. It is time we invested more in our people and less in our defense contractors. My Common-Sense Budget Act would trim \$60 billion in waste from the Pentagon budget and put it to work on behalf of the people and the programs that truly strengthen America. The money would be distributed as follows: \$5 billion a year for homeland security to make up for funding shortfalls in emergency preparedness, infrastructure upgrades, and grants for first responders; \$10 billion each year for energy independence, to kick the imported oil habit that we have in this Nation by investing in efficient, renewable energy sources; \$5 billion devoted to putting a dent in the \$8.2 trillion national debt; and for children's health care, \$10 billion annually to provide health care coverage for the millions of uninsured American children; \$10 billion over 12 years to rebuild and modernize every public K-12 school in this country; \$5 billion a year to retrain 250,000 Americans who have lost their jobs because of foreign trade; medical research, \$2 billion a year to restore recent cuts to the National Institutes of Health budget; and \$13 billion a year in humanitarian assistance that allows poor nations to feed 6 million children who are at risk of dying from starvation every year, to end global hunger.

The money is there to make an extraordinary difference in people's lives. We just need to challenge the entrenched interests and take on the sacred cows.

General Larry Korb worked with the Progressive Caucus and me to draft this model alternative, and Ben Cohen from Ben & Jerry's Ice Cream and the organization Business Leaders for Sensible Priorities also helped make the introduction of this bill possible.

There are models of good corporate citizenship, you see, businesses that understand that the return on these investments will benefit the entire society: a skilled workforce, healthy children, modern schools, fewer fossil fuels, better fire departments, scientific progress, less debt. These socially responsible businesses understand what makes America strong and safe, and it is not a bloated Pentagon budget that continues to invest in Cold War.

#### GAS PRICES

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

Mr. DELAY. Mr. Speaker, gas prices are rising and someone is to blame.

The root cause of the rising gasoline prices, as an editorial in this week's Wall Street Journal rightly states, is the incredible shrinking of supply of a gasoline additive called MTBE. The production of MTBE has been for 15 years the direct result of a Federal mandate that such oxygenates be included in the Nation's gas supply. It was mandated by a Democrat Congress seeking to help clean the environment.

Now, that mandate is expiring in May, in large part owed to the discovery of MTBE in some water supplies, a discovery that has trial lawyers salivating as they count down the days. And the main culprit for its seeping into water supplies is faulty, unrepared, leaking underground storage tanks.

But the producers of those do not have the deep pockets of MTBE producers. Thus, when MTBE producers' liability protection expires in May, as the editorial states: "Producers and refiners will face far greater liability, which has set off a race to exit the market" because, as history has shown, the vultures in the lawsuit-happy trial bar will pounce on those with the deepest pockets.

In other words, the Federal Government mandated the production and addition of MTBE as a clean air additive to the Nation's fuel. But now the government says that mandate, while good for clean air, turns out actually to have been bad for groundwater. Now the government wants to let trial lawyers hold the industry accountable for environmental problems the government itself created with its original mandate. Meanwhile, the Nation's ethanol producers, who must now fill the additive void created by the widespread and predictable MTBE pullout, have already admitted they cannot meet the new market demand.

No MTBE and not enough ethanol will mean less gasoline on the market, less gasoline that can be prepared for the market, creating a shortage of supply and thus higher prices. In other words, come Memorial Day, gas prices, which are already higher than they have been since the early days after Hurricane Katrina, stand to spike even higher.

All of this economic analysis in the Journal's editorial, regrettably, is true. What is not true is the editorial's insinuation that congressional Republicans are to blame for it.

On the contrary, Mr. Speaker, House Republicans fought for years to include MTBE-liability protection in the energy bill. The bill was shelved in 2003 when a Democrat-led filibuster, joined by liberal Republicans, succeeded in killing it, an outcome brought about, the then-Democrat leader said, by "the House Republican leadership's insistence on inclusion of retroactive liability protections for MTBE."

So in 2004 the energy bill effectively died when the Senate Energy and Natural Resources chairman unilaterally pulled the MTBE provisions from the Senate version of the legislation. So, finally, in 2005 the MTBE-protection provision was described by the House minority leader as a "disgraceful . . . giveaway." Enough Senate Republicans agreed with this false assessment to ensure that the energy bill was finally passed, after 4 years of effort, without the desperately needed MTBE provisions that House Republicans advocated for so long.

The result: the ethanol-MTBE fiasco, as the Journal puts it, is not the fault of Republicans on Capitol Hill, broadly speaking, but only about seven of them, all Senators, Senators who joined obstructionist Democrats and eco-extremists to punish an innocent industry.

House Republicans warned all along about the MTBE pullout, the ethanol shortfall, and the resulting spike in gas prices just in time for the 2006 summer traveling season, and we were right.

MTBE liability protection is the only thing standing between the American people and \$3-a-gallon gas this summer. And the only thing standing between MTBE-liability and the President's signature is a collection of Senators, the long-term effects of whose shortsighted grandstanding are only now starting to be felt.

So, Americans, when it hits \$3 a gallon, call the Senate.

Hopefully, yesterday's editorial will give MTBE-protection new life in Congress. And if not, drivers, especially in those States of Senators from New Mexico, Arizona, Maine, Vermont, Iowa, Illinois, North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska, and New Hampshire, will know who to thank.

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#### THE ECONOMY IS NOT AS ROSY AS REPUBLICANS CLAIM

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. FITZPATRICK of Pennsylvania). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from New York (Mrs. MALONEY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mrs. MALONEY. Mr. Speaker, if you look at the headline economic numbers and listen to the Bush Administration's talking points, you could get the impression that the economy is in pretty good shape.

But when we talk to our constituents, we get a very different picture. We hear anxiety about the economy, and a feeling that things are not going very well for the typical American family. The White House seems puzzled by this discrepancy, but it is very simple.

The benefits of the economic recovery from the 2001 recession have not been going to ordinary Americans. President Bush likes to cite statistics on how fast the economy is growing and how much productivity has increased.

But what he does not mention is that, on his watch, the economy went through the most protracted job slump in decades. There is still considerable evidence of hidden unemployment and that the benefits of productivity growth have been showing up in the profits of companies rather than in the paychecks of ordinary American workers.

Yes, workers have become more productive. They produce more and more in each hour that they work, but they have not been getting this reward in