

their gas tanks while affordable housing has become also increasingly rare.

We know what the American people are facing, and we are taking steps to help. Of the many challenges that we are dealing with right now, one important priority for me is to address the housing crisis. Now home ownership has become an unreachable dream for many Rhode Islanders who face the typical monthly housing payments upwards of \$2,200. The situation for renters is not much better. The average two-bedroom apartment right now rents for nearly \$1,200 a month. Meanwhile our State's foreclosure rate has risen 20 percent in the last few months. I have worked to help Rhode Islanders facing foreclosure, but we need to do more at the national level.

I have been proud to support Chairman FRANK's efforts to pass comprehensive housing legislation which would significantly increase availability of affordable housing nationwide and help those facing foreclosure to keep their homes. I am certainly hopeful that the Senate will act soon and we will bring swift relief to the American people.

Our constituents also face skyrocketing energy costs which are eating up an ever larger portion of disposable income. The average U.S. household spends approximately \$1,000 more per year on gasoline than it did 5 years ago. Meanwhile oil and gas companies are reaping record profits while doing nothing to lower prices for consumers. I think this is an absolute outrage.

I have strongly advocated a comprehensive energy plan to lower costs, create jobs and improve our environment. As a short-term strategy, this Congress has, among other things, suspended shipments to the Strategic Petroleum Reserve to provide more oil to the market. We cracked down on price-fixing among energy companies and passed legislation to repeal massive tax breaks for oil and gas companies.

In the longer term, though, we must invest in conservation and domestic production of clean and renewable fuels. This will reduce our reliance on foreign energy sources while creating new jobs in the green energy sector. Unfortunately, the President's stubborn opposition to commonsense initiatives has blocked any real progress. I'm going to keep fighting to move our Nation forward, toward a more responsible energy policy, and I urge my colleagues to join me in this effort.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, I am concerned about the state of our Nation's health care system. Right now, approximately 47 million Americans lack health insurance while the rest watch their coverage costs continue their steep climb. That is why I've introduced the American Health Benefits Program Act, which will provide every American with access to the same quality, affordable coverage as Members of Congress. My bipartisan proposal offers a practical model to begin reigning in costs, improving quality and delivering the

same level of health care that this country deserves.

American prosperity, Mr. Speaker, depends on individual economic security. Only when Americans no longer have to choose between groceries, gas and health care will our economy truly flourish. I am committed to improving the economic outlook for the millions who are struggling, and I will continue working with my colleagues in Congress on this vital and urgent goal.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

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

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

THE ENERGY CRISIS AND THE AMERICAN ECONOMY

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

Mr. BURTON of Indiana. Mr. Speaker, we have been talking about the energy crisis in this country now for some time, and it has captured the imagination and the attention of probably every person in America, all 300 million people, because the price of gasoline is now over \$4 a gallon.

It has affected every family as far as their ability to live the kind of life they want to because they have to spend so much money on energy. It has affected the price of our food because the people who transport our commodities across the country—the truckers—are now paying \$4.50 to \$5 a gallon for diesel fuel. In fact, they've demonstrated here at the United States Capitol with their trucks because it's so expensive for them to do their jobs.

We had a hearing today on how China is being involved in the United States and in Central and South America. They're buying up more and more of the oil because they have an economic expansion program, funded, in large part, by the money that we give to them in trade. India is now taking more and more energy and oil. So the demand around the world is growing at a very rapid rate.

My colleagues on the other side of the aisle are always talking about new energy—new sources of energy, new technologies. I'm for all of that. We all want to clean up the environment, but with the demand for oil growing at such a rapid rate all around the world and with these countries that have more and more ability to buy oil and to use oil because they need more because their populations are growing so rapidly, we need to do something about energy in this country.

We have the ability from coal shale, I understand, to take care of this country for a couple of hundred years, as far

as oil is concerned, by converting that shale into a usable energy oil shale. We have the ability to get 1 million to 2 million barrels of oil a day out of the ANWR in Alaska. We're not doing that. We have the ability to get 1 million or 2 million barrels a day off the Outer Continental Shelf. We're not doing that. We have up to a 500-year supply of natural gas in this country. We're not drilling for that. It's all because of what people call environmental concerns.

I would just like to say to my colleagues on the other side of the aisle that we should be concerned about the environment, but we should also be concerned about the economy of this country. We can't survive if the energy costs continue to go up and up and up while we wait on the transition to new technologies. Those new technologies are going to come, but it may take 1 year, 5 years, 10 years from now before they are able to pick up the major part of the energy needs of this country. We can't wait that long. We simply can't. We could become a second-rate economic power if we don't get control of our energy needs and are able to get the energy that is necessary for this country to grow economically.

I just don't understand why my colleagues on the other side of the aisle and in the other chamber on the other side of the aisle continue to say we should not drill for oil in our own country.

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The American people, if you went out on the street and asked anybody at any service station, will tell you they don't care where we drill, because they want their gas prices down.

Now, we can drill in an environmentally safe way, but my colleagues on the other side of the aisle will not allow us to do it. It is just unexplainable, as far as I am concerned. We have the resources in this country, we have the ability in this country, to provide for the oil resources that are necessary to lower the gas prices in this country, and we are not doing it. And we are not going to do it as long as the other side, the Democrats in this Congress, continue to block us, because of "environmental concerns."

There has to be a balance between the economic concerns in this country and the environment concerns, and my colleagues on the other side of the aisle are simply not realizing that. They have the "ostrich syndrome." They have got their heads in the sand.

Gasoline prices have gone up \$1.50 in the last 2 years since this body has been taken over by the Democratic Party. This is intolerable. They said they were going to do something about the energy crisis in this country when it was \$1.50 less per gallon. We have to do something about it, and we have to start now.

We talked about energy independence during the Carter years back in the