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

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

OIL DRILLING IN AMERICA

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, I have great respect for Ms. KAPTUR, who just spoke. She and I have been friends for a long, long time, and I agree with much of what she just said.

We really need to move toward energy independence, and we need to use alternative methods of getting our independence. The problem is it's going to take time. If we use solar, if we use wind power, if we use all of these alternative sources, it's going to take time. It isn't going to happen in 1 year, 2, 3, or 4 years where we can not rely on oil or gas any longer. It's going to take time. In the meantime, Americans are paying $4-plus per gallon of gasoline because we don't have the oil necessary to keep the cost of gasoline down.

She is absolutely correct. We depend too much on foreign sources of oil. We depend on Saudi Arabia. We depend on Venezuela, which is not a friend of ours. We depend on Canada, on Mexico and on other countries throughout the world. We ought to be drilling right here in America. We have enough energy in this country to become energy independent.

Now, my colleagues on the other side of the aisle say, well, that's going to take time. It may take 10 years, if we get oil out of the ground today, to get it to market. Well, if that is the case, we still should do it, but experts whom I've talked to who have geological backgrounds say that we can start getting that oil to market within 1 or 2 years, and we could force the price of oil down very quickly if we decide we're going to drill here because it's going to put pressure on those who are producing oil that we're using around the world. It's going to force them to reevaluate the cost that they're charging us for the oil we're getting from them.

Some of my colleagues on the other side of the aisle say, oh, these oil companies have all of these permits, and they ought to be drilling where they have those permits now. Those permits run 5 to 10 years. If they don't drill in those areas, then those permits expire, and they're bid on by somebody else.

So why would an oil company not want to drill if they have a permit?

It's because, when they get that permit, they don't know how much oil is down there, and they're certainly not going to invest millions or billions of dollars to drill for oil when they know it's not there. Once they get the permit, they do a geological study, and they do seismic studies to find out if there's oil down there. If there is no oil there, they don't drill, and so they don't utilize their permits. That's why we need to get more land available for drilling.

Right now, on the Continental Shelf, we're using 3 percent of the available area. Ninety-seven percent is not being explored. We can do that in an environmentally safe way, and we ought to allow these oil companies to drill in those other areas and get permits to do it. If there's oil there, they're going to drill there.

Why don't they drill in some of these other areas where there might be some oil?

Well, it costs $2 billion to explore and to build an oil derrick, a platform, out in the Gulf of Mexico or out on the Continental Shelf. If they can't make $2 billion back, they ain't going to drill there. That's why these permits, many times, are not useful, and that's why we need to explore in other areas.

Now I'd like to also talk really briefly about the ANWR. They have done geological studies up there, and they know that there are billions of barrels of oil up there. If we drill there, we can get 1 million barrels of oil a day to help lower the price of gasoline in this country.

So, Mr. Speaker, if I were talking to Americans tonight instead of to my colleagues—and I can't do that because we can't address Americans—I would say this: You ought to contact your Congressman and Senators and say, ''I want my gas prices reduced, and I want you to drill in America. I want you to move this country toward energy independence.'' We talked about it 30 years ago under the Carter administration, and we never did it.

If I were talking to them, Mr. Speaker, I would say that you ought to tell your Congressman to get with the program, to drill in America, to make us energy independent, and to bring down the price of energy, especially that of our gasoline.

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

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

DOCTOR-OWNED HOSPITALS

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

Mr. HASTINGS of Washington. Mr. Speaker, on June 8, the New York Times published a story that raised questions about Senators that amended legislation to protect home State hospitals from a new move in this Congress to ban doctor-owned hospitals. The article labeled these actions as ''special interest'' and questioned their appropriateness. It cited specific Senators, including a senior Senator from my State of Washington.

Mr. Speaker, I'm not familiar with the circumstances surrounding each hospital in the article, but I am very familiar with Wenatchee Valley Medical Center and efforts being undertaken by those who represented in Congress to protect this institution from the threat of a government-forced closure or sale.

The criticism leveled against the Washington State Senator in the New York Times article is unjustified and totally without merit. Senator MURRAY's action to protect the Wenatchee Valley Medical Center was entirely appropriate. In fact, it's what this Nation's citizens should expect from their elected representatives.

Mr. Speaker, it's troubling that the targets of scrutiny are those who are standing up and who are protecting their constituents and not those seeking to force the closure or sale of a hometown hospital system simply because it is doctor-owned.

The Wenatchee Valley Medical Center and its seven clinics serve a rural population, in my State, of a quarter of a million people in an area the size of the State of Maryland. The medical center accepts all patients regardless of their ability to pay, and it has a long record of providing quality care. Today, it is jointly owned by 150 doctors. For this simple reason, it is a target for some who think doctor ownership should be banned.

Twice in this Congress House Democrats have passed bills that would outlaw the Wenatchee Valley Medical Center as it exists today, not because of any poor care or bad behavior by its doctors but simply because it is owned by doctors. I offered amendments to both bills. Some of my amendments would have stopped the ban on doctor-owned hospitals. Others would have altered the ban to protect the Wenatchee Valley Medical Center. Unfortunately, House Democrat leaders blocked every one from even being debated and voted on the floor of the House. These same House leaders also swept aside the objections and concerns of at least eleven Democrats who have spoken out against this proposal and the harm it would cause to their local hospitals.

When I last spoke on the House floor against such legislation, I asked the Democrat chairman of the Energy and Commerce Health Subcommittee if he would work with me to exempt the few existing doctor-owned hospitals that would be impacted in both Democrat and Republican districts. He replied, ''The answer is no.''

The Democrat chairman of the Ways and Means Subcommittee on Health