

with the exception of women and children. The officer will use their good judgment and their good heart.

But if you're arrested in Del Rio or Laredo, you're going to jail. If you're arrested in Tucson, Arizona, Mr. Speaker, carrying less than a quarter ton of dope, you have a 99.6 percent chance of nerve going to jail, and you will probably be home in time for dinner.

It's an unbelievable and outrageous situation that I have worked on behind the scenes as quietly as I can with the Department of Justice, with the U.S. Attorney out there, Diane Humetewa, who refuses to meet with me, who refuses to talk to me, who refuses to cooperate. She, to this day, Mr. Speaker, refuses to do anything to improve the prosecution rate in the Arizona sector of the border. As a result, those officers' lives are in danger. As a result of her refusal to enforce the law, the lives of the people of Arizona are in danger. This Nation is in danger because of the refusal of the U.S. Attorney in Arizona, Diane Humetewa, to do her job.

Frankly, I am sick and tired of it, and it needs to be brought to the attention of the American people here on the floor because we have found a bipartisan solution to this. We have found a solution that people on the border support.

You represent the Laredo sector, Mr. Speaker. I know your community, the people you represent are thrilled with the reduction in the crime rate. It has been a team effort. There are no party labels when it comes to Texans. My good friend, SHEILA JACKSON-LEE, will be speaking in a moment, and we are Texans first. There are no party labels when it comes to what is good for Texas and the Nation.

We have found a solution, Mr. Speaker, in Operation Streamline and the Zero Tolerance Program, enforcing existing law with existing resources and existing personnel in a unified team effort, and it's about time for the U.S. Attorney in Arizona to get with the program and recognize that she has an essential role in protecting this Nation.

Frankly, Mr. Speaker, if the U.S. Attorney in Arizona will not enforce the law and live up to her oath of office, I think she ought to find another job. It's about time for her to just step aside. It's unacceptable for a U.S. Attorney to refuse to enforce the law. Those officers' lives are in danger.

We on the Appropriations Committee, I serve on the Homeland Security subcommittee, Mr. Speaker, we sent 40 additional U.S. Attorneys, prosecutors to the southwest border with specific instructions that those attorneys be used to prosecute border crime. The U.S. Attorney in Arizona got 21 of them, and she will not use them to protect the border or this Nation.

Mr. Speaker, we have done great work in Laredo and Del Rio, and the U.S. Attorney in Arizona needs to get with the program and enforce the law with zero tolerance or find another job.

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

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

ENERGY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 18, 2007, the gentleman from New York (Mr. TOWNS) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. TOWNS. I want to talk about the energy situation tonight. When I go back to my district, the number one subject today is that people are talking about the cost of fuel. Of course, the other one is affordable housing. But when you look at it, they are all connected.

Of course, when you talk to the taxi drivers, they are saying we cannot make a living because of the fact that gasoline is so high. The bus drivers, the same thing. Hardworking people are finding it almost impossible to make it today because of the price of fuel.

Of course, this is something that has happened all of a sudden. In 2005, gasoline was \$2.20 per gallon in December of 2005. Now, today the price of gasoline is \$4.10 per gallon. That is June 19, 2008, according to the Energy Information Administration, the agency that collects official energy statistics for the United States Government. In other words, gas is just creating a tremendous problem in this Nation.

Now I know people will say, Well, here's the solution. But let me just say to you there is no silver bullet here, that there is no single solution to this problem. But I think the worst thing in the world to do is to continue to ignore the problem.

You have people saying, Well, ethanol is the solution. Then you have others will say that the fact that ethanol might not be the solution, but we need to make certain that we create cars that will go further. All these things are good, but when we are dealing with a problem like this, whenever you make a decision or make an adjustment, there's always something else that is going to happen.

Hybrid cars. People are coming in now saying that, Look, we are having problems. The blind, in particular. We travel by sound. We can't hear. We are getting knocked down in the parking lots. Senior citizens are getting knocked down.

So we need to look at all these things to be able to bring about safety, but at

the same time we have to be able to make certain that the fuel prices come down so people don't have to make a decision as to whether they buy gas or whether they buy food. I mean that is where we are. People who have been volunteering, providing care for seniors, driving them to the shopping mall and driving them to various places, are now saying, I can't do it any more because of the price of gasoline. That, to me, is a shame and a disgrace in one of the wealthiest countries in the world, that we are not paying more attention to our seniors, and of course, as a result, things are getting worse.

What I would like to do now is to yield some time to the gentlewoman from Texas, who has been very involved in these issues over the years. Of course, it's my pleasure to yield to her because she understands how important this issue is, the gentlewoman from Texas, SHEILA JACKSON-LEE.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. I want to thank my distinguished friend, Congressman ED TOWNS. I think it's important to note of his leadership on the Energy and Commerce Committee for any number of years. We have joined together on understanding this issue as it impacts our very broad communities.

The distinguished Congressman, as I note, my good friend from Georgia, is on the floor as well. We all come from different districts. He comes from an urban-centered northeastern district that has mass transit very deeply, but as well it's interesting to note that the cost of gasoline impacts all of our constituents.

I come from a broad, if you will, expensive district in the State of Texas that has not only a fledgling metro system, a metro system that we are just beginning to build, mass transit, but as well it is a community that uses its cars.

□ 1945

We carpool. We carpool to work. We live very far apart. It is a very large district. Therefore, the cost of gasoline is very, very costly. So we have to come together to address this question from the perspective of how will the consumer feel? We know there has been a question, a bracelet everybody used to wear asking the question how would a certain heavenly person feel about a question. We now ask, how does the consumer feel?

So I rise today to say that I think it is important for this Congress to come together and to be able to push forward an energy agenda that really gets down to the real individuals that are burdened by this cause. So let me explain, Mr. TOWNS, what I believe is important.

First, let me applaud the leadership for their new direction in energy. It is an important direction. It is a greening direction. It focuses on alternatives. It focuses on creating green jobs and getting a sense of understanding about the smallness of the resources that are

available now, the fossil fuel and other energy resources that need to be utilized, and therefore it is important to, if you will, impress upon Americans the value of conservation. But, at the same time, I think there are a lot of other issues that we can discuss.

I believe we should accept the premise that there are a number of energy resources that this Congress needs to address. For example, I come from Texas, and obviously we utilize fossil fuel. I think it is important to recognize that fossil fuel is present, but I think we need to emphasize looking at independent producers. They were very prominent in years past. These are smaller companies.

I do believe we need to look at where we are exploring off the Gulf, where those States of Louisiana and Texas have willingly accepted the exploration of the Gulf in a safe and environmental way.

Two or three years ago, Congressman NICK LAMPSON and myself passed legislation to encourage the Federal Government to do an inventory of what was available in terms of fossil fuel resources in the Gulf. I think it is important. We know that there are challenges to exploring the Outer Continental Shelf. There are challenges to exploring ANWR. There are challenges in exploring the coast off the East Coast and the California coast and the Florida coast. I believe those issues are issues that we have to work with the local jurisdictions and the governors and consumers for that to be a comfortable process.

But let us not get stuck on that. There are resources in the Gulf. We have found that there is oil shale, I believe, that has been discovered in West Virginia. There are other domestic resources that have been discovered in Mississippi. We need to be able to utilize and to be able to encourage the safe development of existing resources.

We know that our own multinational energy companies are holding leases they have not utilized. I believe it is important to call these individuals into Washington. The President needs to call these individuals into Washington, the heads of these major companies, and let us discuss why these oil leases are not being utilized, because there lies a possibility of additional resources.

Mr. TOWNS, you know that we have been discussing over the years the increasing of minority energy entrepreneurs. They come in all shapes and sizes. But I happen to know an energy company in the State of Texas, Osyka, that is held solely by African Americans with domestic deposits. They have resources. But what do they need? They need investment. They are not overseas. They are right here in the United States, but they need investment.

So I think there are a lot of small, independent producers that the legislative scheme here in the United States does not foster their development, does

not provide them access to capital, does not allow them to build on the resources that they have. You can be assured that the more resources we put out allows us to have the ability to bring down the cost of gasoline.

Let me add an additional point that I think should be considered. When you talk to the multinationals about the cost of gasoline, they will refer you to the antiquated refineries, that they need to build more refineries. That too requires a coming together at the table. I believe we need to have a discussion so they can explain what does it mean by having an antiquated refinery?

There is a new refinery being built in East Texas and in Louisiana. That refinery took a long time to build. But maybe we need to update the refineries. I know that is a questionable proposal and policy to make them more environmentally efficient and safe. That is a key element to dealing with this.

Before I yield back and wait a moment as you yield to the distinguished gentleman from Georgia, I want to cite some numbers that say that the Energy Information Administration estimates that the United States imports nearly 60 percent of the oil it consumes. The world's greatest petroleum reserves reside in regions of high geopolitical risk, including 57 percent which are in the Persian Gulf.

Replacing oil imports with domestic alternatives such as traditional and cellulosic ethanol cannot only help reduce the \$180 billion that oil contributes to our annual trade deficit, it can end our addiction to foreign oil. These alternatives should be matched with domestic production. That may help a lot of these small interested producers.

Also the individual oil companies, the large ones who have leases here in the United States, we need to have an inventory and get a determination, as I said, as to why these leases are not being developed. According to the Department of Agriculture, biomass can replace 30 percent of our Nation's petroleum consumption.

So there are ways we can confront this issue. One other way, of course, is to develop more professionals, which we have discussed, and I want to discuss that later.

Let me conclude by saying we have a real crisis in addition to the cost of gasoline. That crisis includes jet fuel. We are seeing the merger of airlines and also a crisis in the airline industry because of the cost of jet fuel. That too impacts on our consumers.

So I frankly believe as we discuss this, Mr. TOWNS, we should talk about what speculators have done to the energy industry. We should talk about minority entrepreneurs who are able to participate in this industry. We should talk about independent producers. We should talk about greening America. We should talk about conservation. And really we should get to the bottom

line of how we help our consumers. I think if we bring all these elements together, we will be able to do so.

I will yield back to the gentleman and will join you at a later time.

Mr. TOWNS. Let me thank the gentlewoman from Texas for her remarks, because, let's face it, she is right. We need to end our addiction to foreign oil. We have to do that. I mean, there are no ifs, ands and buts about it. That is something we must address.

Of course, the gentleman from Georgia has been out at the forefront talking about this issue, and, of course, we are delighted he has joined us in this discussion tonight. We are happy to have HANK JOHNSON from the great State of Georgia, who is a leader on this issue as well. Thank you for joining us. I yield to you.

Mr. JOHNSON of Georgia. I thank my colleague from New York, the esteemed Congressman ED TOWNS. I appreciate very much you speaking on this very important issue. It is an issue that has been creeping like a thief in the night into the pocketbooks and into the pockets of Americans, everyday working Americans.

We have seen the price of gas escalating quietly but steadily ever since 2001. I say to Congresswoman SHEILA JACKSON-LEE from Houston, Texas, whom I am proud to serve with. And I see my other colleague, BARBARA LEE from California. So we have got all parts of the Nation covered here.

But ever since 2001, when the price of gas was at \$1.50, it has steadily gone up. And that is kind of ironic, given the fact that we elected an oilman to be our President and an oilman to be our Vice President. You would have thought that America would be taken care of by our President and our Vice President. But what we have seen since that administration came to power is prices going through the roof. And, like a thief in the night, people have now awakened to see that they have been gouged and stolen from by the oil industry, and it has all been while we were enjoying a deregulated and unregulated market and we were allowing the speculators, instead of the producers, to get a stranglehold on the American economy. So these speculators are driving up the price of gas, driving up the price of oil. It has become the number one issue in this country.

Mr. Speaker, while it is easy to peddle quick fixes, the hard truth is that there is no quick fix. It is kind of like the war in Iraq. We got in a little easier than it is going to take us to get out. By the way, ironically, some people believe that it was for the 35 billion barrels of oil beneath al-Anbar Province in Iraq that we went to war for. Some people believe that.

So oil has driven much of the policies of this administration. And quick fixes will not do at this point. We are rapidly reaching the point of peak oil, peak oil being the moment, Mr. Speaker, after which global oil supplies will

forever decrease. That moment is approaching. Meanwhile, global demand for oil is ever increasing. So we are reaching a point where we have dwindling supply and skyrocketing demand, and that means one thing, among others, but the biggest thing is that gas prices, high gas prices, are here to stay.

Now, the President came up with an energy plan, it was done in secrecy back in 2001, if you will remember. It seems to me that it was Vice President CHENEY who convened a group of people, whom we still have not found out who those people were, in a task force to formulate this country's energy policy. Someone went to court to have the names and identities of those task force members revealed, and I don't think that lawsuit was successful. But I can only speculate on who was in that room setting the oil policy.

That policy went into effect back in August of 2005. When President Bush signed energy legislation into law, gas at the pump was selling for about \$2.85 a gallon. Then, just 1 year later, in 2006, July 26, Energy Secretary Bodman celebrated the 1-year anniversary of energy legislation, kind of like "mission accomplished." And that didn't pan out either. At that point, 1 year after the anniversary of the signing of the Bush administration energy policy, 1 year later gas had gone up to \$3 a gallon. And, of course, back in May it went up, it continued to go up, to \$3.81 in May. But now we are in June heading towards July, and folks are speculating that we will hit \$5 a gallon by the end of the summer, and Americans are hurting.

So it comes as no surprise that the big oil President and the big oil Vice President propose more drilling, instead of suggesting real, lasting solutions to our energy problem.

The most effective way to address this problem is to start conserving. There is so much we can do to conserve energy. It means so much for our environment. We need to clean this environment up.

I returned from a trip just 1 month ago to the North Pole, Mr. Speaker. The folks up there are talking about what is going to happen as the ice melts and it will open up the shipping lanes, so there will be more traffic, more opportunity to traverse that area, and more opportunity to get at that oil that is up in the North Pole. And I suppose we will run all of the polar bears out trying to get to that oil, trying to sip every last drop of oil that this Earth has to offer, while at the same time creating environmental havoc.

□ 2000

So I would be happy to continue to have dialogue on this issue, but I know that there are other colleagues here who want to address this issue, so I would yield back at this point.

Mr. TOWNS. Thank you, the gentleman from Georgia, for his remarks.

Of course, he's right on the issue. There are no ifs, ands, or buts about it.

We look at the fact that there has been a 5-year trend of record oil profits under this administration. In 2007, the big five oil companies raked in a profit of \$127 billion. That's "B" as in "boy." It is simply unacceptable that consumers are bearing these costs while corporations continue to profit.

Now, the gentlewoman from California, to whom I'm getting ready to yield, has been at the forefront. She has been saying this now for a number of years. Of course, I would say to you that I wish that the country had listened to her because I'm certain, if they had listened to her, we would not have the mess that we have now.

It's my honor to yield 5 minutes to the gentlewoman from California, BARBARA LEE.

Ms. LEE. Thank you very much, Mr. TOWNS.

First, let me thank you for yielding, but let me thank you also for your leadership on this issue and for so many other issues. Your voice is extremely important; your work has been important, and it continues to be quite amazing.

In your coming from New York and in my coming from California, we have very similar issues that we have to deal with in terms of this horrific energy crisis, and so thank you for giving us the opportunity to talk about it one more time.

Also, just as I was listening to my colleague Mr. JOHNSON from Georgia, thank you for that very brilliant presentation and for that historical context. You know, sometimes we forget the past. In the Ghanaian language, in the Akan language, there's a term called "sankofa." In order to move forward, we must look back at our mistakes, and I think what you talked about tonight really makes it very clear that we have to understand how we got to where we are so that we don't make those mistakes again, such as you talked about, which was the drilling in the pristine area in Alaska—in ANWR—and all of the proposals that this administration wants to embark upon.

So thank you very much for that.

To my colleague from Texas, Ms. JACKSON-LEE, you have been on this for many, many years. You come from oil country, and you understand very clearly the oil industry and what we need to do to dig ourselves out of this hole, and so your voice continues to be important in coming from Texas, in understanding that the American people deserve not to have to pay \$5 a gallon for gas. The courage that you've displayed has been amazing. Thank you for your voice and for your leadership.

As we work to reduce skyrocketing prices at the pump, we continue to face opposition from the Bush administration, and our colleagues on the other side of the aisle seem to be content to subsidize the big oil companies' record profits that Mr. TOWNS talked about

and that you talked about, Mr. JOHNSON and Ms. JACKSON-LEE. They reach record profits quarter after quarter rather than adopt a real solution to meet the energy needs across our Nation.

More specifically, we have proposed legislation that would invest in true, clean and renewable energy sources. Our proposals would also bring much needed accountability, which we need desperately, to the energy markets in order to eliminate the price gouging—do you hear me?—that's taking place and the market manipulation and the speculation that have inflated energy prices to record levels. This week, we will also take up legislation to expand the use of public transit systems to save energy and to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

In light of this growing energy crisis, I cannot help but to reflect upon the Bush administration's determination to squander our resources on the immoral occupation of Iraq that has directly contributed to the current economic downturn of the high gas prices that the American people are seeing at the pump. Make no mistake. We are in the middle of the Bush-Iraq recession. The economic hardships that Americans face today are the direct result of this administration's failed and flawed policies at home and abroad.

When President Bush took office in January of 2001, the price of oil was \$23 a barrel, and gasoline cost as little as, I think it was, \$1.35 per gallon. Now, after more than 5 years of bombing and bloodshed in Iraq, since the Iraq invasion, oil has topped \$130 a barrel, and gasoline is averaging more than \$4 a gallon. As Congressman JOHNSON said, it probably will hit the unfortunate cost of \$5 per gallon. By some estimates, the war and continued occupation of Iraq could cost the United States more than \$3 trillion. That's a \$3 trillion bill for this administration's failed policies in Iraq that our children and grandchildren will be paying for years to come.

The American people recognize the toll this immoral occupation has taken on our economy. They're in dire need of assistance. Many face the impossible choice of buying food for their families or of purchasing the gasoline they need to go to work. If we want to see prices at the gas pump go down, one of the first and most essential steps we must take is to end the war and occupation in Iraq.

We must also focus on transitioning our economy away from fossil fuels to the greener alternative fuels of the future. This will be a long-term process that will affect communities throughout our nations in different ways. It's very important to note that, as we continue to forge these new frontiers to achieve energy independence and to safeguard the environment, communities will face many complex environmental and public health challenges. The drastic acceleration of greenhouse gas emissions has often been concentrated in low-income and minority

communities, putting these vulnerable populations on the front lines of the fight against environmental degradation and global climate change.

The communities in my district, like in Mr. JOHNSON's district and in Mr. TOWNS' district and in Ms. JACKSON-LEE's district, all face the severe consequences of pollution, of urban sprawl and of environmental injustice, which harshly affect people of color and low-income communities. Sadly, this epidemic is hitting our children the hardest.

For example, back at home in my own district, when children grow up in the area of West Oakland, they're seven times more likely to be hospitalized for asthma than is the average child in California. None of us can afford to take this lightly. The health of our community and neighbors affects all of us.

I would also like to just take a moment and recognize the role that California's East Bay is playing at the forefront of the green jobs and green industry movement, which is really a critical part in terms of addressing the energy crisis. One of the most exciting and inclusive solutions to the many issues facing environmental health and our energy crisis is the possibility afforded to us by promoting green jobs' training and the growth of the green economy in America.

A true green economy, one that is sincere in its mission and that is deeply rooted in local communities and businesses, can provide innovative answers to many of the problems that our environment faces. Green jobs provide pathways out of poverty for those most affected by environmental injustice, namely, people of color and our urban youth.

We have been working closely in my district with the Ella Baker Center and with the Apollo Alliance. Mayor Ron Dellums—my predecessor here and our colleague—has been working very hard on a new initiative to support the development of green model cities and to focus on economic development through green job training academies and to create a national green institute to serve as a clearinghouse for the green movement. So there are many, many initiatives to which we need to look forward in terms of providing for an alternative to our dependence on foreign oil.

Let me just conclude by saying and by reminding the country that, most recently, the Bush administration has threatened to veto the House-passed H.R. 5351, which is the Renewable Energy and Energy Conservation Tax Act of 2008. This legislation makes critical investments in clean and renewable energy and energy efficiency that will create hundreds of thousands of new jobs and that will help to maintain the United States' position as a leader in innovation as we move toward true energy independence.

So I have to thank my colleagues again, especially the Congressional

Black Caucus and Congressman TOWNS, for allowing us to come down for an hour to talk about the basic components and reasons for this energy crisis and also for allowing us to provide what we see as some real and practical solutions that we can embrace right now—not next year, but today—if, in fact, the Bush administration and his oil industry administration would accept the fact that they're responsible for this energy crisis. The American people deserve a way out.

Thank you.

Mr. TOWNS. Let me thank the gentlewoman from California for her remarks and to say that you're right. Our priorities are definitely upside down. There's no question about that.

Mr. Speaker, how much time do we have left?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Thirty minutes.

Mr. TOWNS. Thank you very much.

At this time, I'd like to yield 5 minutes to the gentlewoman from Texas, Congresswoman JACKSON-LEE.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. I thank you very much. I'm glad to have an opportunity to engage again and to thank Congressman TOWNS.

As I have listened to both Congressman JOHNSON and Congresswoman LEE, I hope that what is gleaned to our colleagues as they listen to us is that there is a consensus, a meeting of the minds, that we've got to do something different. I applaud Congresswoman LEE's collaboration with her mayor, Mayor Dellums.

As I was standing here, I was reflecting on the work that our city is doing. We have Mayor Bill White, but I'm quite familiar with the Apollo Alliance, and I was just thinking that it's time now for another meeting to be able to join in that kind of expansive effort.

So, if the Apollo Alliance is listening, let me congratulate them, and let me tell them to come on down to Texas. We've had some meetings early on, but it's the whole concept of educating individuals to change their lives.

You said something else, Congresswoman, about energy. You used the word "energy" and the words "energy industry." That's coming from what we perceive to be the oil capital of the world—Houston, Texas. I want you to know a lot of hardworking people are working in the energy industry, and they, too, see a new world of alternative fuels and also an opportunity to match, if you will, efficiently explored fossil fuels, because it does exist. There is something called "clean coal." As I indicated to you, there is something in the gulf, outside of your birthplace in Texas and Louisiana, where they have been quietly exploring oil and gas for a number of years, and it has been efficient. Even during Hurricane Katrina we noted that those rigs still stayed safe in the gulf. So we can find ways to combine these efforts.

As I listened to Congressman JOHNSON and he took us chronologically to

2001, I want to remind him that post 2001, in 2002, there was created the havoc and the travesty and obviously, as he indicated, the crisis of the Iraq war. Whether or not the Iraq war was for oil, as has been debated, it destabilized the region. When you destabilize the region where all of the oil is coming from, you obviously dumb down the resources coming from that area.

But I wanted to bring to the attention of my colleagues that we know that Saudi Arabia, in this meeting that they've held in the last 48 hours, has suggested that they will increase oil production by 200,000 barrels a day to 9.7 million barrels a day, starting on July 1, in response to the current energy crisis.

The concern there, of course, is that China is increasing its needs, and even though we're sort of plateauing out, I do believe that this is an issue that might not be resolved by the increase in the per barrel per day, meaning the 200,000 barrels per day.

We need a summit. We need a summit here in the United States. We need to get all of the parties together, discussing these components—the high gasoline price, the lack of utilization of the independent producers, not giving capital an access to African Americans and to other minorities who, in fact, might be good stewards of the energy resources, such as those who are finding oil in the Deep South, such as those who are engaged in green and in alternative fuels such as wind.

I offered a bill on cellulosic ethanol, which, I think, is really one of the next steps. Of course, this was embodied in the Democratic conservation bill that included cellulosic ethanol. I know there has been debate over corn ethanol, but here is an approach: Through cellulosic ethanol, costly though it may be, it has a long-term impact.

I also believe it's important to support the legislation that has been offered by two of our colleagues—one to be, I believe, JOHN LARSON, who is moving forward on legislation that has to do with the speculator. We have heard, even today, oil analysts who have said that the speculators are adding an artificial price. In fact, the Enron loophole that was offered by Senator GRAHAM has given a whole array, a whole new industry on speculation, and more and more energy companies are pulling back from that. They're dealing with their own product and with their own need, and I want to applaud them for that.

I want to cite Representative VAN HOLLEN's Energy Markets Anti-Manipulation and Integrity Restoration Act. I happen to be a cosponsor of that legislation. I think it's important. I voted to stop the filling on the Strategic Petroleum Reserve, which will help American families by temporarily diverting the 70,000 barrels of oil that goes to the SPR a day and putting them out on the market.

What I think is important, again, Congressman TOWNS, is that we're not

having face-to-face discussions. I asked the question of one of the members of OPEC: What would be the possibility of Members of Congress being observers at the OPEC meeting?

The OPEC meeting has large numbers of African countries. It has large numbers of countries from South America. Then, of course, it has those from the Middle East. I, frankly, believe it's somewhat similar to treaty discussions, that it's somewhat similar to the discussion on race in South Africa when they were on track, that it's somewhat similar to the United Nations. It would be Members of Congress' representing the most powerful law-making body in the world, as described by others, their being able to go to the OPEC meetings as observers and understanding the process of how this oil and gas moves.

□ 2015

This does not diminish the call for conservation. But I do think it will open our eyes.

Ms. LEE. Let me just say how important that is because we are the people's House. Americans don't understand why they are paying \$4.50 per gallon. They expect us to be able to tell them. I think by observing OPEC, being there, interacting and understanding, listening to the dialogue, will give us a much better handle on what the crisis is from OPEC's perspective and what proposed solutions are coming out of OPEC.

I hope we can move forward on that because I think that is a very creative idea. We have to do things out of the box and do things that are creative because so many people are suffering. Thank you for that, and hopefully we can work together to support that.

Mr. TOWNS. Let me say one other thing. I think the energy summit is just a terrific idea because you have so many people who feel there is a single solution to the problem. There is no single solution to the problem. It is going to require less dependence on foreign oil. We must recognize that. We must promote market-based programs that recognize and reward clean energy technology. We need to do that. And we must launch a cleaner, smarter energy future for America that lowers costs for consumers.

We must look at ethanol and consider wind and look at all of these different things in order to make certain that the problem is solved.

I yield to the gentlelady from Houston, Texas.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. If I may quickly conclude so my distinguished friend from Georgia, who has made some valid points about the Iraq war that we are still suffering, I was reading something, Congressman JOHNSON, about the condition of the Iraq oil wells and the difficulty of bringing them online and the need for U.S. investment or other investment.

It is interesting, a lot of people think we are making a lot of money in Iraq;

we are spending a lot of money in Iraq, I will tell you that.

Let me say this. I will thank all three of my colleagues. I will continue to work and pursue an answer. The Representative indicated he was very interested, and would go back and ask. The meeting is in September and I will pursue that. I don't have the exact location, but I believe it is in Europe. If so, it would be easy for us to go.

I think the other part would be to give the energy leadership of these multinationals, and obviously they are in my congressional district, but a forum to be able to have a conversation outside of a hearing setting. We need to ask the hard questions. We need to ask how much of the cost of gasoline is the refinery cost? How much of the cost of jet fuel is refinery cost? What is attributable to having old refineries, and what can you do to make the energy name of your industry more diverse, to have more green and more alternatives such as wind and biomass.

I am told that wind is very expensive, but you can't get that answer if we are not sitting down at the table.

I thank the gentleman for the idea of a summit. We may work on that. Let me conclude by saying we have been working in this Congress. I don't want anyone to think that we have not been sensitive. You listed a whole road map that you, Mr. TOWNS, as a senior member of the Energy and Commerce Committee have been very much involved in. For example, the Renewable Energy and Energy Conservation Tax Act of 2008, a combination of the Ways and Means Committee and the Energy Committee, which I think is very important because it encourages the development of innovative technologies, creating new jobs, reducing carbon emissions, protecting consumers, shifting production to cleaner renewable energy, and modernizing our energy infrastructure.

The note I want to end on is we have to get more young people involved.

Mr. TOWNS. And it also has gas price gouging and market manipulation included in that legislation.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. And that is very important.

What I want to end on is we must get more of our young people involved in the energy industry. We worked on this, Congressman TOWNS. We had a bill about geologists. I have listened to Congresswoman LEE as the chairwoman of the Energy Brain Trust, and we are going to try and focus on that and push our communities, Hispanics and African Americans and other minorities and women, to get into this industry and provide their sensitivity and provide their perspective so that they can talk eloquently about what gasoline prices really mean when they are this high. And then to add to the broader community of America who is crying out for relief, I believe we can turn the corner, or we should, and to bring to all of America an opportunity to have reasonable energy resources,

heat in the winter and air conditioning in the summer, and reasonable gasoline prices; because, frankly, I don't think that we can last much longer if we don't bring relief.

I thank you for bringing this very important special order to the floor tonight.

Ms. LEE. I just want to emphasize one point raised by Congresswoman JACKSON-LEE with regard to getting our young people involved. This is a huge new industry. We have proposed the green job training academy to begin to look at the green industry.

It is my understanding that now venture capitalists are looking at this as investment opportunities that will create trillions of dollars in terms of job creation and in terms of an industry. And these are jobs that do not require necessarily a 4-year college degree or a Ph.D. These are jobs, once trained, young people will qualify for and will be able to make a living wage with benefits, good-paying jobs. So we have to provide our young people with these alternatives because they are going to school now and they are getting out of school, and there are no jobs. They have not been trained for the jobs of the future. This has to be an initiative that we pursue.

Mr. TOWNS. I yield to the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. JOHNSON).

Mr. JOHNSON of Georgia. Thank you, Congressman TOWNS.

Just listening to the comments of my colleagues, I am intrigued with so many things. My colleague from Texas (Ms. JACKSON-LEE) is pretty much saying we have to have dialogue with our partners around the world, be they friends or foe. Because the bottom line, people talk about the global economy. It is true, we have a global economy. It doesn't always work as fairly as it should, but the bottom line is that we have a global economy. And some folks are making out like bandits, and others are sinking. And so it is time that we have equity in this world.

I know Congresswoman LEE, you have been a woman who has throughout your career insisted on taking care of the have-nots while the haves can continue to be prosperous as well. And so dialogue with our oil-producing nations is so important.

Because by the way, Congresswoman SHEILA JACKSON-LEE, drilling is one of the tools that we need in our tool basket to address this issue. We must take advantage of the leases that have already been granted by this government to the oil companies, that they have been sitting on for years waiting for the price to go up so they can start drilling.

And Congresswoman BARBARA LEE, you talked about the children, and the children are so important. I am looking at an article in today's Washington Post. It says "Fuel Costs May Force Some Kids to Walk." It means that our local boards of education have to pay for the price of diesel fuel which is going through the roof. And to get our

children to school costs a whole lot more money than it did last year. And so that means less money for teachers and less money for school infrastructure, the buildings, less money for books.

This oil crisis is wreaking havoc on us, and our children are looking to us to make the right decision. They are counting on us to make the tough choices for the future. They are counting on this Congress to understand that the most effective way to adapt to this changing reality or this new reality, which is dwindling supply with increased skyrocketing demand, we must as a tool in our toolbox insist upon conservation while we also extend tax incentives to companies to develop solar energy. I mean, we have a vast desert where I think it was 107 degrees out there, or more, sun brightly shining down. Do you mean to tell me that we can't put some solar panels out there and start capturing that sunlight and changing it to electricity, to help take some of the demand away from fossil fuels. It is much cleaner, but I think the oil companies would have a hard time trying to get their fingers and their hands around the sun. So we haven't seen a lot of solar energy.

We are getting more wind coming through because of the global-warming phenomenon, the disruption of our climate. We are getting the wind, but we are not using that wind to help us with our energy needs. We need to do that.

Biofuels. And all of these new things are on the table, but instead what we get is a new plan announced by the President which is more drilling, and drilling in our sensitive areas in our environment.

Ms. LEE. If the gentleman would yield, what you are talking about, which is so important, is a comprehensive energy independence plan. We need a national plan for energy independence that provides for this toolbox, as you describe it, that allows for all of the alternatives.

I read in the newspaper that rural communities, because people have to drive so far to jobs, people are having to make decisions whether or not they can afford to go to work because the cost of gasoline is higher than the cost of their wages. Rural communities throughout our country are being devastated by the price of gasoline. This is an emergency.

Mr. JOHNSON of Georgia. The price of food is going up. So we have food going up. We have energy costs going up. And the American people feel squeezed. They are counting on us to do something to address this issue.

Congressman TOWNS, I just appreciate so much your emphasis on this dilemma that we face. We are, I think, proving that all Americans are concerned about the future of this country insofar as energy is concerned.

Mr. TOWNS. It affects a lot of things. First of all, when you look at young people and you talk about the gas prices and what it costs for them to go

to work, it prevents them from purchasing a home. They can't afford to buy a home and pay all of these high prices for gas. And of course the fact that some buses are not running, which as you indicated means children are going to have to walk to school because of the fact that these buses are saying we are not making a profit because of the gas prices.

So when you look at the facts, they do not have affordable housing, and the fact that they can't afford to buy a home because of the gas prices, and of course we need to look at tax incentives and things that will bring about this discussion that we need to have because this is a serious problem. And to ignore it, it is not going to go away. It is going to get bigger and it is going to get worse.

We have to come together with a policy that is going to protect not only the seniors, the young, and the middle-aged, to protect America. This is something that we must do. We can no longer allow and have the rich continue to get richer and at the same time having people in a position to have to make a decision whether they are going to buy gasoline or whether they are going to buy food. That is wrong, and we should not stand for it.

I yield to the gentlewoman from Texas (Ms. JACKSON-LEE).

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. You have given an eloquent summary of the crisis that I think most Americans are facing.

□ 2030

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. I would like us to move past these hot months that we have right now and begin to look forward into particularly the colder areas of America and begin to think about what is going to happen with heating fuel and this new coming winter season. We sort of got the tail end of the high price of gasoline sort of as we were leaving the winter months or as we were getting into the summer months, and we saw a crisis of people going on a vacation and taking their kids places during the summer facing this very high cost for gasoline per gallon.

But I met with some of my power companies who provide energy, and, of course, I am in a warmer climate than many of my colleagues. But I am concerned about what we will confront with natural gas and other fossil fuels that may be utilized for heating people's homes. What a crisis for elderly and others and families who can't afford their heating fuels.

So I believe that today on the floor of the House we have offered a suggestion. A summit doesn't mean 3,000 people. It means getting all of the parties together that can sit at the table. Get this energy industry at the table. Let them lay out what is a concept of your company, because energy for me means that you are diversified under the concept of energy, green energy, alternative biomass, begin to look at how we can lay down this roadmap.

And then I think, of course, we need to emphasize the environmentally safe exploration of drilling, as my colleague indicated, and the reason why I say that is because it's still going on in the gulf, not as they say—I know it's difficult in other areas. But in the gulf, it's still going on, and it should be environmentally safe.

Then I think as members of the Congressional Black Caucus we need some meetings with the heads of the nations in the Continent in Africa, Angola, Guinea Bassu, Nigeria. Ghana is finding oil. And it would be very helpful to sit down and have a discussion as to how their product can be marketed where there is—I know the bottom line has to do with dollars—but where there is a sense of morality, a sense of rightness on how that works. And again, it ties into my inquiry and outreach that I am going to make to OPEC because I think a lot of heads are better than none. And you listed all of the good works of the Renewable Energy and Energy Conservation Tax Act of 2008, and I think it's important to note this is what the Democrats did.

But I want to invite people to come together during the Congressional Black Caucus, Mr. TOWNS, and we can join together under the energy brain trust. I must pay tribute to my predecessor, and you certainly knew him, Congressman Mickey Leland, who organized the brain trust, on the basis of getting a sense of morality in this industry. In fact, he was coming into it with another energy crisis that was certainly in that time.

So I believe that with all of the hidden resources that we still have, we will open resources that we can address. And the only reason why we're not coming together is I don't think that we're putting our heads together to be able to develop the kind of balanced policy that brings these people together.

I do want to make mention of the fact that I am looking forward to a roundtable discussion with leadership in my district. However, that is the beginning stages of what I think can be a larger question for this Congress to address, for leadership, for members of the Congressional Black Caucus, for our caucus members to address, because our constituents and poor constituents and elderly constituents and ailing constituents are impacted by the high cost of gasoline and heating oil.

And I thank the distinguished gentleman for giving us an opportunity to raise these crucial issues that I believe have to be raised.

Mr. TOWNS. Madam Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentlewoman from California (Ms. LEE).

Ms. LEE. Thank you for yielding, Mr. TOWNS. I thank you again for your leadership for bringing us together, but it's going to be through your leadership and others here on the floor tonight, our great Speaker, and bringing together Members of this body to make sure that we can have a bipartisan national energy plan.

I said earlier, and I hope we will always remember, that the jobs that are going to be created by the development of new, innovative energy independent industries, such as the green industry, will be millions of jobs for our young people. And we have to also remember, as I talked earlier, about the long-term public health consequences and the environmental concerns as we move toward energy independence and clean energy, green energy, wind, solar, all of the alternatives that will provide for a much better quality of health for all Americans, as well as for a cleaner environment.

So we do have a chance for a win-win-win. We can create millions of new jobs, we can create a trillion-dollar industry, we can create a cleaner environment, we can create livable communities throughout our country if we would just understand the moment we're in and be honest with the American people and be serious and do some of the things we talked about.

But also I think it's important, as I close, to also remember that the occupation of Iraq, the bombing and invasion of the country of Iraq that was a country that was not an imminent threat to the United States of America where there were no weapons of mass destruction, the havoc that we have wreaked on the country of Iraq and Iraqi civilians and our brave troops, this is a big part of why, when the war started, we were paying about \$1.35 per gallon, \$35 per barrel; now we are paying \$4.50, soon to be \$5 a gallon, close to \$140 per barrel.

So we can not forget the economic impacts of this occupation of Iraq and remember that we have to include a demand that we end it and we bring our young men and women home.

Mr. Speaker, I would first like to thank Representative TOWNS for holding this special order tonight on an issue that is on the minds of so many of my constituents.

As the Democratic Majority works to reduce skyrocketing prices at the pump, we continue to face opposition from the Bush administration and my colleagues on the other side of the aisle who appear content to subsidize the Big Oil Company's record profits quarter after quarter rather than adopt real solutions to meet the energy needs of people across the Nation.

More specifically, we have proposed legislation that would invest in truly clean and renewable energy sources.

Our proposals would also bring much-needed accountability to the energy, markets in order to eliminate the price gouging and market manipulation and speculation that have inflated energy prices to record levels.

This week, we will also take up legislation to expand the use of public transit systems to save energy and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

But, Mr. Speaker, in light of this growing energy crisis, I cannot help but also reflect upon the Bush administration's determination to squander our resources on the immoral occupation of Iraq that has directly contributed to the current economic downturn and the high gas prices the American people are seeing at the pump.

Mr. Speaker, make no mistake, we are in the middle of the Bush Iraq recession. The economic hardship that Americans face today is the direct result of this administration's failed and flawed policies—at home and abroad.

When President Bush was signed into office in January of 2001, the price of oil was \$23 a barrel and gasoline cost as little as \$1.35 per gallon.

Now, after more than five years of bombing and bloodshed in Iraq, oil has topped \$130 a barrel and gasoline is averaging more than \$4 per gallon.

By some estimates, the war and continued occupation of Iraq could cost the United States more than \$3 trillion. That's a \$3 trillion bill for this administration's failed policies in Iraq that our children and grandchildren will be paying for years to come.

The American people recognize the toll this immoral occupation has taken on our economy. They are in dire need of assistance. Many face the impossible choice of buying food for their families or purchasing the gasoline they need to go to work.

If we want to see gas prices go down at the pump, one of the first, and most essential steps we can take, is to end the war and occupation of Iraq.

We must also focus on transitioning our economy away from fossil fuels to the greener alternative fuels of the future. This will be a long term process that will affect communities throughout our Nation in different ways.

But it is important to note that as we continue to forge new frontiers to achieve energy independence and safeguard the environment, communities will face many complex environmental and public health challenges.

The drastic acceleration of greenhouse gas emissions has often been concentrated in low-income and minority communities, putting these vulnerable populations on the "front lines" of the fight against environmental degradation and global climate change.

The communities in my district face the severe consequences of pollution, urban sprawl, and environmental injustice—which harshly affects people of color and low-income families.

Sadly, this epidemic is hitting our children the hardest. Back home in my district, children growing up in West Oakland are seven times more likely to be hospitalized for asthma than the average child in California.

None of us can afford to take this lightly. The health of our community and our neighbors affects all of us.

As the Representative of California's 9th Congressional District, I would also like to take a moment to recognize the role that California's East Bay is playing at the forefront of the green jobs and green industry movement.

One of the most exciting and inclusive solutions to the many issues facing environmental health is the possibility afforded to us by promoting green jobs training and the growth of the green economy in America.

A true green economy, one that is sincere in its mission and deeply rooted in local communities and businesses, can provide innovative answers to many of the problems our environment faces.

Green jobs provide pathways out of poverty for those most affected by environmental injustice, namely minorities and our urban youth.

To that end, my office has been working closely with the Ella Baker Center, and the

Apollo Alliance in my district, to expand green jobs and green job training programs.

I am also working with the mayor of Oakland on a new initiative to support the development of green model cities that focus on economic development through green job training academies and to create a national green institute to serve as a clearinghouse for the green movement.

While we are convincing long-standing businesses to go green and new businesses to start green, we must ensure that we are also funding opportunities to train our local youth and qualify our existing work force to be able to work in these industries.

I want to end by saying what so many of us deeply understand: over the last eight years the Bush administration has been openly hostile to the environment.

His administration has repeatedly cut funding for the EPA and put forth disastrous environmental policies that have rolled back environmental protections and undermined the safety and well being of our Nation and our planet.

Most recently, the Bush administration has threatened to veto the House passed H.R. 5351, the Renewable Energy and Energy Conservation Tax Act of 2008.

This legislation makes critical investments in clean, renewable energy and energy efficiency that will create hundreds of thousands of new jobs and help to maintain the United States' position as a leader in innovation as we move toward true energy independence.

I urge my colleagues to help bring an end to policies that place corporate profits ahead of the long-term interest of public health and the environment, and instead work toward a greener and more prosperous future for the United States and the world.

Mr. TOWNS. Mr. Speaker, how much time do we have left?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. About 4 minutes.

Mr. TOWNS. On that I would like to yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. JOHNSON).

Mr. JOHNSON of Georgia. Thank you, Congressman TOWNS.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to point out the fact that in the short time that the Democrats have been in leadership in Congress, we've passed no less than eight bills, passed them on to the President, the President has either threatened to veto them or vetoed them; and now the President proposes a plan that will have little or no impact on gas prices. It will take years to implement, it will threaten the environment and does nothing to decrease our dependence on foreign oil. And this is a plan that JOHN MCCAIN opposed as recently as last week when he made his announcement that he's now in support of this failed policy. So we look like we're headed for Bush-McCain a third term.

And instead of pandering to the oil industry, the President should work with this Congress to come up with a plan to address our long-term energy challenges. And I want to thank you, Congressman TOWNS, for leading up this effort. I'm proud to be among my members of my fellow colleagues in the Congressional Black Caucus because we're showing that we are broad based. We understand what is happening down

home with the average Americans. And we stand with average Americans, regardless of what color, regardless of what shape or size or even sexual inclination. We stand with you because we're all in the same boat together.

Mr. TOWNS. Thank you.

Let me thank all of you for participating in this Special Order. It was said earlier on, I think by Congresswoman LEE, that one reason the food costs have increased along with fuel costs is that fuel is required to both produce and transport food. So in this regard, the rise in fuel costs is felt not only at the pump but at the grocery store as well because people are paying more for our gas.

So I want to thank you for highlighting this tonight because this is something that we just can no longer stand back and ignore.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, if the gentleman will yield, I want to thank Congressman TOWNS, and let me extend to my colleagues an invitation to come to Houston and let us have a summit, a discussion, beginning discussion for energy and getting a roadmap for energy.

I would like to thank my fellow CBC Member, Representative TUBBS-JONES for her consistent leadership on the issue of energy. "I am proud to have worked with my dear colleague in the CBC on a number of occasions to promote a most energy responsible America.

We are all painfully aware of the devastation high energy prices have had on American families. This New Direction Congress, of which I am proud to be a part, is fighting to reduce our dependence on foreign oil and bring down record gas prices, and launch a cleaner, smarter energy future for America that lowers costs and creates hundreds of thousands of green jobs.

It is undeniable that America, today, is in the midst of an energy crisis. Just this weekend, Saudi Arabia, the world's top oil exporter, announced that it will increase oil production by 200,000 barrels a day to 9.7 million barrels a day starting July 1st in response to the current energy crisis. While this is an important step in the right direction, it is not enough. At a recent world economic forum in Doha, I called for Members of Congress and the United States Government to participate in OPEC's deliberations, in regards to energy production.

I am extremely supportive of the legislation introduced by my distinguished colleague from Maryland, Representative VAN HOLLEN, The Energy Markets Anti-Manipulation and Integrity Restoration Act, of which I am a proud co-sponsor. This important legislation would close the so-called Enron loophole by adding energy to the list of items that cannot be traded on deregulated "exempt commercial markets", as well as closing the Foreign Board of Trade (FBOT) loophole by forbidding an exchange from being deemed an unregulated foreign entity if its trading affiliate or trading infrastructure is in the U.S., and it trades a U.S.-delivered contract that significantly affects price discovery.

Just last month, I voted to stop the filling on the Strategic Petroleum Reserve which will help American families by temporarily diverting the 70,000 barrels of oil that go into the SPR

a day, and consequently has the potential to reduce gas prices from 5 to 24 cents a gallon, helping American families, businesses, and the economy as a whole.

There is an undeniable consensus on the importance of America achieving energy independence in the 21st century. It is critical that we terminate our dependence on foreign sources of oil, the majority of which are located in regions of the world which are unstable and in most circumstances, opposed to our interests. Accordingly, there is no issue more essential to our economic and national security than energy independence.

I was happy to vote for the Renewable Energy and Energy Conservation Tax Act of 2008, which is significant and comprehensive legislation that will make substantial strides towards energy independence for our Nation, while also encouraging the development of innovative technologies, creating new jobs, reducing carbon emissions, protecting consumers, shifting production to clean and renewable energy, and modernizing our energy infrastructure.

In addition to being a representative from Houston, Texas, the energy capital of the world, for the past 12 years I have been the Chair of the Energy Braintrust of the Congressional Black Caucus. During this time, I have hosted a variety of energy braintrusts designed to bring in all of the relevant players ranging from environmentalists to producers of energy from a variety of sectors including coal, electric, natural gas, nuclear, oil, and alternative energy sources as well as energy producers from West Africa. My Energy Braintrusts were designed to be a call of action—to all of the sectors who comprise the American and international energy industry, to the African American community, and to the nation as a whole.

Energy is the lifeblood of every economy, especially ours. Producing more of it leads to more good jobs, cheaper goods, lower fuel prices, and greater economic and national security. Bringing together thoughtful yet distinct voices to engage each other on the issue of energy independence has resulted in the beginning of a transformative dialectic which can ultimately result in reforming our energy industry to the extent that we as a nation achieve energy security and energy independence.

Because I represent the city of Houston, the energy capital of the world, I realize that many oil and gas companies provide many jobs for many of my constituents and serve a valuable need. The energy industry in Houston exemplifies the stakeholders who must be instrumental in devising a pragmatic strategy for resolving our national energy crisis.

That is why it is crucial that while seeking solutions to secure more energy independence within this country, we must strike a balance that will still support an environment for continued growth in the oil and gas industry, which I might add, creates millions of jobs across the entire country.

We have many more miles to go before we achieve energy independence. Consequently, I am willing, able, and eager to continue working with Houston's and our Nation's energy industry to ensure that we are moving expeditiously on the path to crafting an environmentally sound and economically viable energy policy.

Furthermore, I think it is imperative that we involve small, minority- and women-owned,

and independent energy companies in this process because they represent some of the hard working Americans and Houstonians who are on the forefront of energy efficient strategies to achieving energy independence.

According to the U.S. Minerals Management Service (MMS), America's deep seas on the Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) contain 420 trillion cubic feet of natural gas (the U.S. consumes 23 TCF per year) and 86 billion barrels of oil (the U.S. imports 4.5 billion per year). Even with all these energy resources, the U.S. sends more than \$300 billion (and countless American jobs) overseas every year for energy we can create at home.

I believe that we should mandate environmentally safe and efficient exploration techniques in the Gulf Coast which energy companies have demonstrated a willingness and capacity to utilize. By ensuring access to increasing sources of energy in an environmentally conscious way, I believe we can decrease our dependence on foreign oil.

I support innovative solutions to our national energy crisis, such as my legislation which alleviates our dependence on foreign oil and fossil fuels by utilizing loan guarantees to promote the development of traditional and cellulosic ethanol technology.

The Energy Information Administration estimates that the United States imports nearly 60 percent of the oil it consumes. The world's greatest petroleum reserves reside in regions of high geopolitical risk, including 57 percent of which are in the Persian Gulf. Replacing oil imports with domestic alternatives such as traditional and cellulosic ethanol can not only help reduce the \$180 billion that oil contributes to our annual trade deficit, it can end our addiction to foreign oil. According to the Department of Agriculture, biomass can displace 30 percent of our nation's petroleum consumption.

Along with traditional production of ethanol from corn, cellulosic ethanol can be produced domestically from a variety of feedstocks, including switchgrass, corn stalks and municipal solid wastes, which are available throughout our nation. Cellulosic ethanol also relies on its own byproducts to fuel the refining process, yielding a positive energy balance. Whereas the potential production of traditional corn-based ethanol is about 10 billion gallons per year, the potential production of cellulosic ethanol is estimated to be 60 billion gallons per year.

In addition to ensuring access to more abundant sources of energy, replacing petroleum use with ethanol will help reduce U.S. carbon emissions, which are otherwise expected to increase by 80 percent by 2025. Cellulosic ethanol can also reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 87 percent. Thus, transitioning from foreign oil to ethanol will protect our environment from dangerous carbon and greenhouse gas emissions. With its commitment to American biofuels, this legislation calls for a significant increase in the Renewable Fuels Standard. It encourages the diversification of American energy crops thus ensuring that biodiesel and cellulosic sources are key components in the America's drive to become energy independent.

By investing in renewable energy and increasing access to potential sources of energy, I believe we can be partners with responsible members of America's energy producing community in our collective goal of reaching energy independence.

Mr. TOWNS. Mr. Speaker, the balance of the time I yield to the Congresswoman from Jacksonville, Florida, (Corrine Brown).

Ms. CORRINE BROWN of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I first of all want to thank Congressman TOWNS for hosting this energy information transportation session today.

And I was very excited last weekend that I was in your district, and I was able to ride the train from Union Station to downtown New York. That distance, I was able to do it in 2½ hours, and the goal of our Transportation and Infrastructure Committee is to be able to do it in less time.

Mr. TOWNS. From Washington to New York 2½ hours?

Ms. CORRINE BROWN of Florida. That is right. And we want to do it in 2 hours.

But the key is we were able to do that, and I was able to take that train ride and read and contemplate what we've got to do. We've passed the Amtrak bill. We've got to move this country forward, and I want to thank you for your leadership on this issue.

We've had our heads in the sand long enough on the issues of global warming, and I'm glad that the House Leadership is making this issue a top priority. You only need to look at the constantly rising gas prices to understand why we need to focus on energy independence.

My home State of Florida is particularly vulnerable to weather pattern changes brought about by climate change. Florida on average sits just 98 feet above sea level and each year battles hurricanes with increased frequency and intensity.

Fortunately, the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee is taking the bull by the horns and looking at ways that we can decrease the negative effect our transportation system has on the world's ecosystem.

One simple way to do this is increasing the use of passenger and freight rail. Freight railroads have made major gains in fuel efficiency through training and improved locomotive technology. A single intermodal train can take up to 280 trucks off our highways. Today, one gallon of diesel fuel can move a ton of freight an average of 414 miles, a 76 percent improvement since 1980. And General Electric will soon unveil the world's first hybrid locomotive.

Passenger rails' ability to reduce congestion is well known, with ridership numbers increasing steadily each year. One full passenger train can take 250–350 cars off the roads. Passenger rail also consumes less energy than automobiles and commercial airlines. But we need to get people to wake up and start making passenger rail a priority in this country.

Unfortunately, this also brings up the bigger issue of capacity and what we are able to accomplish with the limited rail capacity that currently exists in the United States. We need to find a dedicated source for increasing rail capacity and we need to do it now to prepare for the future.

This may not be an easy task, but it is the right thing to do for future generations.

Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I rise to urge Congress to enact legislation to lower gas prices and invest in alternative energy.

In Texas, the price of a gallon of gasoline has risen more than \$1.05 in the past year.

No one drives more than Texans do. With thousands of miles of highways and cities located far from one another, efficient transportation is frequently on our minds.

Nationwide, gas prices have risen from \$2.20 per gallon in December 2005 to \$4.10 per gallon on June 19, 2008, according to the Energy Information Administration, the entity that collects official energy statistics for the United States Government.

Gas prices are hurting our local families. Citizens must make tough economic choices because of the crippling effect that high gas prices is having on their lives.

Congress must show leadership and take action to address this problem of high gas prices.

Congress should work toward the goals of long-term energy solutions that promote economic and environment stability.

We should invest in research to reduce our dependence on fossil fuels. Wind-, solar-, hydrogen-, nuclear-, and geothermal energy sources are all viable options that should be considered.

We should mandate stricter fuel economy standards on all automobiles.

We should utilize alternative fuels that are environmentally sustainable.

We should incentivize the use of public transportation and improve our transportation infrastructure.

We should conduct stronger oversight to determine if gas prices are being artificially inflated.

My years on the Transportation and on the Science Committees have heightened my sensitivity to this subject of rising gas prices.

I have worked to help these committees pass legislation that:

Funds research for environmentally-friendly highway materials;

Secures dollars for our local transportation infrastructure; and

Supports research on alternative fuels, plug-in hybrid cars, hydrogen, ethanol, and other energy sources.

In Texas, we spend a lot of time in our cars. High gas prices are particularly impactful to our economy.

There is no simple or quick solution to this problem of gas prices, but Congress must show leadership and take action to address it.

Mr. Speaker, I am concerned about my constituents. They are asking for relief from escalating gas prices, and I want to be proactive.

The time to act upon this issue is today.

Mr. TOWNS. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

ENERGY POLICY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 18, 2007, the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. LATTA) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Mr. LATTA. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity on this special order this evening to talk about a very, very important issue that's facing this country, if not the most important issue, and that is energy.

We have several Members this evening that will be addressing the

House to talk about the energy policies, or lack thereof, in this country. And the first gentleman that I would like to recognize is the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. WITTMAN).

Mr. WITTMAN of Virginia. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Ohio for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, as I drove around the district today, I got to speak to a number of folks, in fact, even over the weekend; and the number one issue on their mind is our energy policy in this Nation. And they asked me, Rob, what are we going to do about fuel prices? What are we going to do about making sure that we have the long-term interests of this country at heart when we develop this energy policy?

You know, I get to experience that every day. I'm privileged to live close enough to the Capitol here where I commute back and forth every day. I live in a little town that's about 80 miles from here, and I drive that every day. So I get to know what the cost of gas is, and I can really relate to folks back in the district when they ask me, What are we going to do about making sure that we have a good, comprehensive energy policy and making sure that we address fuel prices.

For me, it is about an 80-mile commute, and it is very similar to other folks who live back in the district, whether they live in the upper part of the district in the Fredericksburg area or down in Hampton Roads. Many of them commute day after day. They have to deal with the cost of commuting to get to their work. And they also have to deal with that as they commute to take their families, whether it's to school or whether it's to after-school activities for their children. It's really putting a crimp in their budgets, and they are very, very concerned.

As I drive through the district, I get to see the price of gas each day, and it ranges anywhere from \$4.10 a gallon up in the Washington metro area down to \$3.83 a gallon down in the Tappahannock area. So I know the range of fuel prices in the district, know where the best places are to buy fuel. But it's still extraordinarily expensive for people. And that really makes it difficult on them. It really puts a crimp in their budgets. It creates challenges for them, and it creates hardships for them. And that's something that they say, Why isn't Congress acting? Why aren't you coming up with a solution for these real problems that we have to deal with day in and day out?

And it's frustrating for them. They watch a Congress that really kind of stumbles and doesn't do anything. And I can understand their frustration and understand why they are frustrated with us.

You know, I would like to relate a couple of different stories.

Earlier in the district, I spoke with some folks in the Fredericksburg area,