

new plan to lower energy prices, but consider this: The President's invasion of Iraq and tacit military threats to Iran have destabilized the Middle East and driven oil prices out of control.

Big Oil has leases, access, and decades to drill on millions of acres on the Continental Shelf, but they choose instead to drill down into the wallets of the American people. Oil companies are already exploring today. They're exploring the upper limits of their stock prices by using their billions in profits to buy back stock, not to reinvest in America.

We still don't know what the Vice President's secret meeting with the industry was when gas prices were \$1.50 a gallon, but it sure looks like it's working for the oil companies, but it isn't working for us.

We've got a plan, and we will propose it and bring it out here on the floor.

THE FUTURE OF AMERICA IS AT STAKE

(Mr. SAM JOHNSON of Texas asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. SAM JOHNSON of Texas. Mr. Speaker, to help families dealing with the high price of gas, the White House ended the ban on deep ocean energy exploration. Now it's up to the Congress to give this commonsense move the final green light.

We must pursue increasing production of American-made energy in an environmentally conscious manner off the coast of the Atlantic, the Gulf, and the Pacific. We have the technology to access fuels right here in America while still protecting our natural resources for future generations.

We should and must develop our own oil and natural gas resources in the deep waters offshore, on Federal lands, and in oil shale if we want to revive America's independence. It's past time Congress got off the dime and approved deep ocean energy exploration today.

Americans, the future of America is at stake.

MOVING TOWARDS A NEW DIRECTION

(Mr. ALTMIRE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. ALTMIRE. Mr. Speaker, the American economy has lost nearly half a million jobs this year with six consecutive months of negative job growth. In fact, under this administration our economy has the slowest record of job growth since the Hoover administration, has added \$3.5 trillion dollars to the national debt and seen the value of the dollar plummet. Gasoline is \$4.10 a gallon, the stock market has flatlined, the financial industry is in crisis, and the housing industry teeters on the brink.

We simply cannot afford to continue the same failed policies of the past 8

years. And while Senator MCCAIN's chief economist says that it's all in our heads, that the Americans are just whining about the economy, Democrats recognize the problem and are working to provide some relief. And though we lack cooperation from a President who doesn't share our values, we have shown leadership by overriding his vetoes four times now and counting.

Democrats in Congress are leading the way and moving towards a new direction for our economy.

ENERGY POLICY

(Mr. BROWN of South Carolina asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. BROWN of South Carolina. Mr. Speaker, yesterday I spoke at a rally highlighting how America's energy crisis is impacting the working men and women in our Nation. The average working person in my district works at a hotel or a restaurant meeting the needs of the tourism industry.

That average person also drives to work. There is no light rail or subways taking them from rural homes to their place of work near the coast. The folks they serve probably drove hundreds of miles with their families for a well-deserved vacation, but few families are coming to the beach this year because of high gasoline prices. It also means that few folks will be working at the hotels and restaurants.

Mr. Speaker, the Democrat-led House's lack of action on energy policy is affecting every segment of our society, so much so that I am receiving drill bits in the mail demanding that we take action to lower energy prices in America. Those drill bits aren't coming as part of some well-financed campaign; they're coming because we can no longer hope that the problem will go away.

Like many other countries, the United States is blessed with many types of natural resources. I agree with the vast majority of Americans by viewing our natural resources as one of our greatest assets, not as an environmental liability.

We must take action now and vote on legislation immediately that would allow for more domestic energy to be produced by Americans for Americans.

LIHEAP

(Mr. OLVER asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. OLVER. Mr. Speaker, to significantly lower gas prices at the pump, Congress must end rampant speculation in crude oil futures, yet our Republican colleagues in both branches have consistently opposed such legislation. Meanwhile, a whole new crisis looms as families face a price approaching \$5 per gallon for heating oil for their homes. That's twice last winter's price.

Last winter in Massachusetts and New England alone, 350,000 low-income families used the LIHEAP program to get by, yet only one in four of the families eligible by income use the program. Many of those already eligible families will be in desperate need of help this winter, and many more middle-income families' budgets will be severely stressed by the doubled price of home heating oil.

Heat for a home or an apartment is not optional for any family, and Congress must act on an historic investment in LIHEAP before we finish our session.

DIPLOMATIC PRESSURE ON IRAN IS WORKING

(Mr. PENCE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. PENCE. Mr. Speaker, no one wants war with Iran, but America and our allies in Europe have been exerting increased diplomatic and economic pressure to move the nation of Iran and its government away from developing a nuclear program.

In May, Congressman GARY ACKERMAN and I introduced bipartisan legislation, H. Con. Res. 362, urging this administration to impose expanded economic sanctions on key sectors of the Iranian economy. It appears as though it's having its good effect. In what's being reported today as what will be the "closest contact between the two countries since the Iranian revolution of 1979," this weekend, U.S. Ambassador William Burns will meet with top arms negotiators from Tehran. It will be more of a listening session and should not be overstated.

However, I would offer that this glimmer of hope in these negotiations is precisely because of the resolve of the United States and the European community to economically and diplomatically isolate Iran over its nuclear ambitions. But now is not the time for us to shrink from renewed diplomatic pressure.

I urge all of my colleagues to join Congressman GARY ACKERMAN and me and cosponsor H. Con. Res. 362 before this weekend. Let's send a deafening message to the negotiators in Iran that the American people stand for diplomatic and economic isolation until they abandon their nuclear ambition.

THE ANSWER TO OUR OIL PROBLEM: PRODUCE, PUNISH, AND PROMOTE

(Mr. PERLMUTTER asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. PERLMUTTER. Good morning. My friends on the Republican side of the aisle are complaining about gas prices, but with two oil men in the White House, is it any wonder that the price per barrel has gone from \$30 at the beginning of the Bush administration to \$150 or thereabouts.