

of market forces. To them, I ask, what about price supports for domestic cartels—for example, for dairy farmers.

Why a helping hand for farmers, but no hand for the elderly trying to heat their homes, or the small independent trucker trying to bring goods to the market?

So let's be clear. OPEC production cuts are a big factor. But there's a lot more to this current crisis, and a lot more at our disposal than relying on OPEC production to increase supplies and reduce prices.

For instance, what about suspicions of domestic price gouging? Yes, it's possible there are culprits within our own borders.

The fact that fees are added at different points along the process of moving crude oil to consumers—from processors to refiners to shippers to dealers—makes it hard to pin down all the factors which have contributed to the price spikes. No matter who you blame or how you calculate it, however, consumers are now paying two-and-a-half times the cost of crude straight out of the ground.

Although milder weather is on its way, we cannot wait idly for the sun to shine and for OPEC to convene next week while soaring gas prices continue to afflict and affect families and businesses.

So, I rise in support of immediate action. With or without this bill, the Administration has the authority to withhold foreign assistance. It has the authority to draw down from the Strategic Petroleum Reserve. It has the authority to create heating oil reserves to provide supplies to cushion against future shortages and price hikes. The Congress has the authority to broaden LIHEAP to struggling families who can't pay exorbitant heating bills, and to invest more in energy conservation and renewables to wean us off dependency on foreign oil and help our environment.

At a time when U.S. taxpayers are suffering, our government has every right—and an obligation—to press OPEC countries, who receive substantial U.S. aid, to consider the impact of their policies on the streets of the United States. I urge the administration to act now—and to learn from and help compensate for the mistakes of almost a decade ago.

The CHAIRMAN. The Committee will rise informally.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. SAXTON) assumed the chair.

SUNDRY MESSAGES FROM THE PRESIDENT

Sundry messages in writing from the President of the United States were communicated to the House by Mr. Sherman Williams, one of his secretaries.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Committee will resume its sitting.

OIL PRICE REDUCTION ACT OF 2000

The Committee resumed its sitting.

Mr. GILMAN. Mr. Chairman, I am pleased to yield 1 minute to the gentleman from Texas (Mr. BARTON).

Mr. BARTON of Texas. Mr. Chairman, I applaud the enthusiasm of the Committee on International Relations

to bring forward something to at least focus the Nation's attention on the energy price increase we have had in the last 3 or 4 months. I cannot applaud, though, their work product. I am going to oppose the bill. I am going to insist on a point of order on the amendments that should have been before the subcommittee that I chair, the Subcommittee on Energy and Power of the Committee on Commerce.

I want to point out one fact. In the fiscal year that just ended, the United States of America gave directly in foreign aid, military aid, economic aid and food aid to the OPEC nations \$197.9 million. Based on \$30 per barrel for oil, that is less than one day's supply of imports of oil to this country. So if the amendment as reported out of the Committee on International Relations had kept the teeth in it and if the President of the United States had dictated that all of our aid be suspended to the OPEC nations that have engaged in their cartel, it would have impacted the cartel by one day of oil imports to this Nation. I hope we will oppose the bill and work for responsible solutions.

Ms. LEE. Mr. Chairman, I yield 1 minute to the gentlewoman from Connecticut (Ms. DELAURO).

Ms. DELAURO. Mr. Chairman, this bill does absolutely nothing to help working families cope with higher energy prices but frankly we can expect an energy bill without content from a Republican Party without an energy policy. Just take a look at their record. They want to lay the blame elsewhere. But they slashed \$1.3 billion from energy efficient programs that would reduce our dependence on gas and oil. They wanted to sell off the Strategic Petroleum Reserve. They wanted to abolish the Department of Energy. They will not reauthorize the President's authority to draw down from the Strategic Petroleum Reserve. We had an opportunity here last night with amendments that were offered to set up a Northeast Petroleum Reserve in order to deal with home heating oil, to look at tax incentives for our domestic production of gas and oil, renewable sources of energy, all kinds of ways in which we could address the problem that people are facing today in this country.

And what did they say? No. They said no because this is about politics. This is not about an energy policy. What we need to do is to look people straight in the eye and say, this is what we want to do to help you cope with the high cost of energy.

Ms. LEE. Mr. Chairman, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. WYNN).

Mr. WYNN. Mr. Chairman, I thank the gentlewoman for yielding me this time. I rise in support of this measure, the Oil Price Reduction Act, although it will not do that but I think it is important that we do send a signal that

we are concerned about this issue and that we recognize this issue hits at the very heart of America's prosperity and it hits at every American family.

I want to make a couple of observations, though. This is a bipartisan issue, and it really deserves some bipartisan solutions. Unfortunately my Republican colleagues in many instances chose to play politics. They denied concrete amendments which would have really done something, amendments to use the strategic reserve to calm the marketplace, amendments to provide incentives for greater production, a reserve that could help the Northeast with home heating costs. Those are real action items that we could have done on a bipartisan basis but they said no and blocked the amendments.

Second, I want to observe that since they have been running this place for the last 6 years, they could have instituted an energy policy that would have made us self-reliant. They have not done so.

Third, I want to observe that this bill is not a bad idea but it does not do anything more than the President already can do. So let us not oversell this. The President has the right to engage in these negotiations. He should and in point of fact he is doing so in the form of a quiet diplomacy that we believe will yield positive results when OPEC meets. But it is important that we do send a signal and Congress in fact does have a role.

What am I saying? Simply this. We need to say to our foreign oil-producing allies that there is a link between your cooperation and our generosity in foreign aid. When I look at the foreign aid request of Indonesia for \$135 million, of Nigeria for \$80 million, of Russia for \$252 million, I believe these countries can play a constructive role in helping us lower oil prices. I do not think we should have to beg. I think we should send an important signal to them which this bill does. That is, that we are serious about oil prices in this country and we expect and hope that our allies will be supportive. I think that is an important first step. But we need to do more. It needs to be more concrete and we need to do it on a bipartisan basis.

Ms. LEE. Mr. Chairman, I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. MASCARA).

Mr. MASCARA. I thank the gentlewoman for yielding me this time.

Mr. Chairman, I rise today to call attention to the threat that rising oil prices pose to our economy. We are witnessing the most drastic price increases since the oil crisis of the 1970s. Many of my colleagues recall the devastating impact of high oil prices during that period. Long lines at the pumps and rationing were only modest inconveniences compared to the economic impact of double-digit inflation,