

who oppose a balanced approach to retreat from their long-held opposition to targeted and responsible oil exploration at home. They need to unlock the Outer Continental Shelf and lift their ban on the development of the vast oil shale deposits in western States.

America is the third-largest oil producer in the world. We possess within our own borders triple the amount of oil potential of Saudi Arabia with oil shale alone. It is time for the opponents of a balanced approach to unlock these vast domestic resources that will allow us to finally start the process of increasing domestic supply even as we work together toward a future free from dependence on Middle East oil.

Our friends have been reluctant until now to unlock these vast domestic reserves because of an aversion to fossil fuels and a sluggish attitude toward legislating in the middle of a Presidential election year. But Americans are more concerned right now about paying for gasoline and groceries than they are about the political calendar. And, over the past couple of weeks, a number of our friends on the other side have indicated they want a balanced solution too.

So far, a dozen Democrats have expressed some level of openness to new domestic exploration. We are approaching a bipartisan consensus on the need to increase domestic supply. But their leadership isn't there. Their Presidential nominee opposes every effort to increase supply. The Speaker of the House is walking in lock-step with Al Gore.

It is time for Republicans and Democrats to come together on high gas prices. It is time to put aside old and outdated prejudices about offshore exploration, which is being done safely by countless other countries around the world and here at home too. It is time to use the resources we have and stop timidly nibbling around the edges. It is time to deliver for the American people. It is time to do what we were sent here to do.

A serious solution is already at hand. The Gas Price Reduction Act, with 44 coponents, features a speculation piece that addresses the concerns of the bill the Democratic leadership would have us vote on tomorrow. But it is bolder than just that. It also contains the elements of a serious energy bill. It faces supply and demand head on by lifting the ban on Western oil shale development and opening up exploration far from the shores of the states that want it. And it promotes energy efficient vehicles like plug-in electric cars and trucks.

The Gas Price Reduction Act was written with one bipartisan principle in mind: find more, use less. If we adopt it, the American people will see that Congress is taking their concerns seriously.

Anything short of this bill will not be welcomed by the American people and will prove to be a waste of energy. If we pass the speculation piece alone, Americans will continue to demand a serious solution that gets at supply and demand. But we can avoid such a disappointment now by getting behind a proposal that directly addresses the price of gas at the pump.

This is a big problem, and the problem is bigger than just speculation; good ideas from all sides should be considered. It is what the American people demand.

HONORING OUR ARMED FORCES

PRIVATE FIRST CLASS SAMMIE E. PHILLIPS

Mr. McCONNELL. Madam President, I rise to speak about a hero of the Kentucky National Guard who gave his life in defense of freedom for our country. PFC Sammie E. Phillips was tragically killed on September 10, 2007, when his vehicle overturned during patrol in Iraq. Hailing from Elizabethtown, KY, he was 19 years old.

For his bravery in uniform, Private First Class Phillips earned several awards, medals and decorations, including the Good Conduct Medal, the Kentucky Distinguished Service Medal and the Bronze Star.

Sammie's wife, Ashley Phillips, says of her husband, "I want everyone to know how proud Sammie was and how he truly was a hero, just like he always wanted to be."

In his too short life Sammie made a big impression on many people. He had a way of brightening any room when he walked in, and he made lots of friends.

"The thing I remember about Sammie the most was his smile," says Laura McGray, a former high-school teacher of his. "His eyes stood out. In some people their whole souls shine through their eyes. That was Sammie."

Sammie grew up in Elizabethtown and attended North Hardin High School in nearby Radcliff. Like a lot of young men his age, he enjoyed watching scary movies, and he liked Cadillac cars.

He was a big Tennessee Titans fan. He liked listening to rap music, and had big speakers in his car so he could do just that. Most of all, he enjoyed spending time with family and friends, especially Ashley, who he met during his junior year at North Hardin.

"He was very dedicated to his friends and relationships and would give a person the shirt off his back," says Ashley.

Sammie graduated from high school in 2006, and enlisted in the Kentucky National Guard. When he received his orders to deploy to Iraq, he asked Ashley to marry him. That was on a Wednesday. That Saturday, Sammie and Ashley were wed.

The happy couple had 10 days together before Sammie reported for

training. In August of 2007, he shipped out to Iraq.

In uniform, Sammie continued to impress people just as he had in high school. He was assigned to Battery B, 2nd Battalion, 138th Field Artillery, based out of Carlisle, KY. He qualified as an expert gunner and became the gunner in his tank.

CAPT Robert S. Mattingly, the commander of Sammie's unit, calls Sammie "an excellent soldier who had unlimited potential. I rode with Sammie while training in Mississippi. He was one of our best gunners, the absolute cream of the crop. He was always ready to go, which is one of the best traits a soldier could possess."

Captain Mattingly adds:

I never met a person that didn't like Sammie Phillips.

Donald C. Storm, the former Adjutant General of the Kentucky National Guard, says Sammie was "a tremendous young soldier that just had tremendous potential."

Sammie aspired to one day be an architect, a goal he told Ashley about when they first met. He had hoped to go to school to study architecture once he returned from Iraq. He saw himself as a builder, and he built big dreams for himself and for a future with Ashley.

Sammie's unit returned home from Iraq in May of 2008. Sadly, PFC Sammie Phillips did not return with them. At Sammie's funeral at the Stithton Baptist Church in Radcliff, 3,000 people turned out to pay their respects to the boy with the big smile. Sammie's mother, Rachel Crutcher, wrote a letter to her son that said:

I know you're in heaven saying, "Momma, don't cry."

Rachel says:

He was someone special, and I knew . . . that he'd be an inspiration to everyone he came in contact with.

Madam President, our prayers are for the Phillips family for their terrible loss. We are thinking of Sammie's wife, Ashley Phillips; his mother, Rachel Crutcher; his stepfather, Donny Crutcher; his father, Ronald Phillips; his sister, Cassandra Phillips; his brother, Logan Crutcher; his grandfather, Ted Stiles; and many more beloved family members and friends.

Madam President, Ashley tells us that her Sammie was proud of his service. He told his mom that if he were to die while wearing his country's uniform, "everyone was going to know who he was."

Well, this U.S. Senate knows, and we certainly will not forget PFC Sammie E. Phillips's service and sacrifice. We honor the life of this dedicated man, soldier, and patriot, and stand in awe of devotion like his that continues to keep our Nation safe and free.

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader is recognized.

PARTICIPATING IN THE
LEGISLATIVE PROCESS

Mr. REID. Madam President, we have a very busy week ahead of us. I have announced some of the work we are going to do, but we really do have a lot to do. I look forward to this being a very productive week. I hope things work out as well as I anticipate.

Mr. President—I am sorry that I referred to you as “Mr. President.” That is pretty standard when you just have—as I mentioned last week, we sure have a lot more women than when I first came here. When I came here, we had Senator MIKULSKI. Now, on this side alone, we have 11 Democratic women, which has made the Senate a much better place.

Madam President, as Senators OBAMA, REED, and HAGEL travel through Iraq today, there is one conclusion they will undoubtedly all reach: our troops—about 150,000 strong—have done a remarkable, heroic job under nearly impossible circumstances.

This war has been going on for a long time—more than 6 years—approaching about \$1 trillion having been spent. Today, we are spending \$5,000 a second in Iraq. We have more than 3,000 double-amputees. We have a significant number of returning veterans who are blind, paralyzed, and, of course, the traumatic head injuries they have had have been significant. It will be a legacy of this country for a long time to pay for all that. But because of the valor of these troops and their sacrifice, a war that was irresponsibly planned and incompetently waged by President Bush has now shown signs of improvement, and that is good. Neither Democrats nor Republicans can take any credit for that. Every ounce of credit goes to our men and women in uniform, and we are grateful to them beyond words to describe.

It would be impossible to fully repay our troops for the sacrifice they and their families have made. But this Congress took a historic step forward—over the President’s objection and over Senator MCCAIN’s statement that the bill was too generous—and we passed, in spite of MCCAIN’s objection and the President’s objection, a new GI bill of rights—the largest expansion of veterans’ benefits since the original GI bill after World War II.

As Senator OBAMA visits Iraq to listen to our troops and commanders and meet with Iraqi leaders, it is becoming clear that America, Iraq, and the world are coalescing around Senator OBAMA’s plan to end the war.

I spoke yesterday to someone I know very well. He has had three tours of duty in Iraq.

I said: James, what do you think of Senator OBAMA going to Iraq?

He said: The troops love him.

For someone who has had three tours of duty in Iraq, I think he has the credentials to say that.

That plan sets a responsible timeline for redeploying American combat brigades, transitions the responsibility for securing Iraq to the Iraqis—as Senator LEVIN has said for many years: Take the training wheels off and let them run their own country. It restores America’s military readiness. Right now, because of this long war, our military is in very difficult shape. Estimates of bringing the military to what it was before the war started is now approaching at least \$150 billion. Finally, it takes the fight to America’s No. 1 enemy, Osama bin Laden.

This weekend, Prime Minister Al-Maliki spoke in favor of the Obama plan. Today, despite pressure from the White House, Iraqi Government officials publicly reiterated their support. They want us out of their country. If you take a poll—and there have been many taken—80 percent of the Iraqis want us out of that country. They have suffered significantly during this war.

We are all glad Saddam Hussein is gone. But they do not know definitely the number of Iraqis who have been killed. There are wide-ranging estimates from 150,000 to 600,000. We know that millions have been displaced. There are 2 million out of the country. There are a million and a half wandering around inside of Iraq who are displaced.

The American people have known for years that our national security interests require us to carefully bring our troops home and call on the Iraqi people to take the reins of their own sovereign nation. The vast majority of Iraqis, I repeat, are eager for the day to come when they control their own destiny. They are ready for the war to responsibly draw to a close.

Even President Bush—even President Bush—who bears the primary responsibility for this incompetently managed war, is now belatedly and gradually moving toward some elements of key Democratic positions on Iran, Afghanistan, and Iraq. The President has labeled his new position for Iraq a “time horizon.” Try to figure out what that means. We don’t know. But at least he is recognizing there must be some timeline set. No one knows yet what a “time horizon” actually means, and it is clear that President Bush has no plans to draw down the war before he packs his bags in January. This critical national security decision will fall to the next President.

While it is becoming increasingly clear that the American people and Iraqi leaders strongly support the Obama plan to bring our troops home, Senator MCCAIN is stubbornly clinging to his open-ended commitment to endless war.

Senator MCCAIN has called upon Senator OBAMA to listen to our troops and commanders in Iraq. He criticizes Senator OBAMA for not going to Iraq again. And he criticized Senator OBAMA for

going to Iraq. Senator OBAMA is, though, listening to our troops and commanders, and it is clearer than ever that his position was right from the beginning.

Now it is time for Senator MCCAIN to listen to the American people. If he does, he will discover a nation desperate for a responsible path out of Iraq. If Senator MCCAIN fails to join the chorus of calls for a responsible path out of Iraq, the choice in November will be even more clear than it is now.

Madam President, I want to talk about energy speculation, about energy generally.

This weekend, Senator MURRAY delivered the weekly Democratic radio address. In her remarks, the Senator from Washington said that her last gas fill-up in the State of Washington was \$4.35 a gallon. Nevada is not far behind.

I have spoken on the floor about gas prices on countless occasions, and each time the crisis has grown worse. Last month, we heard from a public school teacher, who gave the Democratic response to President Bush, a teacher in Auburn, NY, who has had to spend all the money he and his wife used to save for their children’s college tuition on gasoline. All across our country, billions and billions of dollars that rightfully belong in the pockets and savings of American families are being funneled instead to oil companies and oil-producing countries. That diversion of savings from American families to foreign governments and oil companies is nothing short of a national crisis.

When our country is in a crisis, Congress must be ready to take action. We Democrats in Congress, working with Senator OBAMA, have tried to take action again and again. We have proposed both long- and short-term solutions—short-term solutions to bring down gas prices now and long-term solutions to attack the root of the problem: our growing addiction to oil.

We had something called the Energy First Act. It would end the billions of dollars in tax breaks for big oil companies whose executives have been hauling in record profits while we pay record prices. Last year, the oil companies made \$250 billion net.

Second, in that piece of legislation, we would force the oil companies to do their part by investing some of their profits in clean and affordable alternative energy—the Sun, the wind, geothermal, biofuels.

Third, we protect in that legislation the American people from price gougers and greedy oil traders who manipulate the market.

We also, in that legislation, among others things, stand up to OPEC and countries that are colluding to keep oil prices high.

One of my friends is a foremost anti-trust lawyer in America. His name is Joe Alioto, Jr. He has painted the picture very clearly that there is a conspiracy going on. We have a bipartisan