

be able to set a goal of weaning our nation's economy from petroleum within a reasonable period of time. However, given the extreme bipartisanship nature of our Congress and the influence of legacy lobbyists on legislation, I do not see that happening.

FRED, Boise.

Thank you for providing this forum to learn and receive feedback as to how the outrageous fuel price increases are adversely affecting us personally. Sadly, with all of the feedback that you have received, there is no "quick fix" or immediate resolution to this issue, unless of course, the major oil producers and suppliers wish to "pay it forward" by reducing the price of unleaded regular and diesel by 50%.

My fuel costs, like everyone else's, have doubled since 2005. We are making every effort to reduce our costs by driving less, even with two diesel powered vehicles. Boise lacks viable and practical public transportation that would further help reduce everyone's costs, so we all continue to struggle with these outrageous price increases.

Here are some facts for you, to illustrate these price increases:

On July 4, 2005, the price of diesel was \$2.43 per gallon. Today, the price is \$4.75 per gallon, nearly double in three years!

On January 31, 2008, the diesel price hit \$3.24 per gallon, and on May 23, 2008, the diesel price hit \$4.55 per gallon. Major oil company stations are now selling diesel in excess of \$4.89 per gallon, over 200% increase in three years.

Since January 31, 2008, diesel prices have increased 67%.

In the meantime, as a new and recent retiree now living on Social Security, my benefits increased \$50 per month from 2007 to 2008, hardly enough to offset these constant rising prices. Tack on the recent increases for Idaho Power (25%), Intermountain Gas (10%), and food costs, senior citizens on fixed incomes are juggling to keep pace, and still pay for their necessary medicines.

The major oil companies have all boasted significant profits ranging from \$5 billion to \$10 billion per fiscal quarter, and some executives have testified that they are paid in excess of \$10 million annually. The oil companies have also indicated that profits to shareholders have jumped a whopping 40 cents per share. It is very easy to see that the oil companies, their executives, and the shareholders are becoming very wealthy at the expense of the American consumer. That is simply not right, nor is it fair!! The major oil companies are also exporting large quantities of diesel fuel to European and Asian markets, which have much larger price increases driving their markets.

The oil companies, like any other business, needs to focus on providing a quality product, at a fair and reasonable price, to all consumers. Rather, the oil companies are rapidly increasing their profits, holding back on product delivery, speculating on oil futures to further drive up prices, and the American consumer is getting victimized daily by the oil companies actions.

Sadly, there is no immediate fix for this problem! Any new drilling will fail to drive down prices for at least five years. New and more efficient vehicles will be expensive such that many Americans will be unable to afford them. (A \$45,000 hybrid vehicle would cost consumers over \$600 per month in payments and interest.) Production of biodiesel and ethanol is counterproductive if the cost per gallon of these products exceeds the current gas and diesel prices. Consumers clearly need gas and diesel costs lowered.

Yet we (America) are spending \$150 billion a year on a war in Iraq that has no perceived outcome and that has not positively influenced oil price reductions! NASA is sending a space craft to Mars to investigate planets on which we could never reside or survive! In the last five years, NASA space craft failures have cost American consumers at least \$165 million per failure. We simply do not have that luxury to waste money! Cut NASA's budget in half and give that money back to consumers! Stop the war and bring our troops home safely, and give that money back to American consumers! Stop pork barrel spending and give that money back to consumers! We in Idaho do not need to help finance projects in other state's Congressional districts where we fail to realize any benefit, except for loss of revenue.

Congress's job is to provide for the American people, not special interests, and operate the government's business successfully, providing any profits to the American consumer. That is not happening.

The business of running the federal government is a business, and Congress and the President has failed miserably to provide for the American consumer. With the trillions of dollars racked up in Congressional debt, America could soon be bankrupt. That would be a hard lesson in reality. The gas and diesel fuel crisis is a significant indicator of a failing economy. I will be watching to see what Congress can do. Thanks again for allowing this forum.

JACK, Boise.

We should start drilling in ANWR and off our coasts. We have shale in several states that we are not allowed to access; we should open this up, too.

One of our sons just driving to work and back is paying \$8 a day for gas, and he drives a midsize Honda. Another son drives a Subaru and he is paying \$150 a month for gas, just getting to work. Another son drives a semi-truck and cannot take care of his family of eleven, with the cost of fuel being so high. All of these sons are not in high paying jobs, so it is affecting what they can pay for housing, food and other costs. They are all hard-working and do not accept government assistance; they want to stay free of government help.

Please consider drilling, we have oil here, why cannot we use it? We feel that as soon as we start drilling the price of oil will go down because of the threat of competition. Thank you for asking for our input; we have sent your message to other people also.

FRANK and JO ETNA.

I would love to share with you the impact that higher gas prices has had on our family. In the past two years, I have suffered horribly with a condition called psoriatic arthritis. It has had some very disabling qualities about it. We have always been a very close family and have followed our children literally around the country with their athletics. My husband and I live in a small rural area of SE Idaho, and our children and grandchildren love to come and visit. With my health problems in the past several years, I am not able to travel and get around like I once did, so our children have been the ones to load up the grandkids and come to Grandma and Grandpa's house. With the rising gas prices, my children are now unable to come up as often, which is tearing me to pieces. I have even offered to help pay for their gas, but with our limited income, and their wonderful sense of pride, they do not want to accept it. There are very few areas

they have to cut back from, while trying to raise young families, in order to come up with the extra money to get here on a regular basis. To us, there is nothing more important than family, and our family has been greatly affected by the high costs of gas/fuel.

I would love to see us move forward and stop having to rely on other countries (and playing games with the devil to do it) and start utilizing our own resources. That has always been one of the greatest things about our country is our self-reliance and willingness to help others. In order to help others, we must be able to help ourselves and put ourselves in a position to where we do not have to beg, borrow, or steal from other countries when we have the resources here to take care of our needs. I would urge Congress to get on board and start utilizing our resources to save our country. It is only a matter of time before we start having major trucking strikes—can you imagine where we will be if this takes place?

Then we do not have to just worry about where we are going to get the money for fuel, but how we are going to eat and survive. Businesses will soon start folding under the extra heavy burden for fuel and gas prices. It really paints an ugly picture of where we might be a year from now.

We will be watching this issue very closely and the candidates we select had better have this vision in mind if you are going to earn our vote.

PATTI, Montpelier.

#### ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

##### REMEMBERING DON ALEXANDER

● Mr. BINGAMAN. Madam President, it was with sadness that I learned of the death of Don Alexander. I was honored and fortunate to get to know him in the later stages of his distinguished career when I joined the Finance Committee. His advice and guidance on a variety of matters, but particularly on issues involving the Internal Revenue Service, were invaluable to my staff and me. With Don, you knew he was always going to bring to bear the wisdom acquired over years of service to his country, and the taxpayers, and do so with the enthusiasm and energy of a person half his age.

Throughout his career, Don always stepped forward to answer his country's call to duty. He took his integrity, thoughtfulness, and decency to the battlefields in World War II, and to the Internal Revenue Service where he was Commissioner during some of its most troubling times. Don confronted all challenges with confidence and determination, never wavering from his principals or strong sense of fairness.

At a time when our President is calling for all Americans to consider the importance and the need for government service, we need look no farther for a role model than former Commissioner Alexander. I honor him for his service to our country and all that he did to make us a stronger Nation.●

##### TRIBUTE TO MARTHA BRYANT

● Mr. ISAKSON. Madam President, I wish to honor in the RECORD of the

Senate Martha Bryant, a true leader and an excellent businesswoman, for her many years of service to her community.

Martha has a long history of service to the communities she has called home. Born in Waycross, GA, the daughter of Arloa Gerald Morgan Wood and Joseph Cepheus Wood, she returned to her hometown after college to teach high school English for 3 years. Following that, she was certified as a professional YMCA director and served as program director for the State YMCA of Georgia from 1959 through 1962.

The citizens of Rome, GA, were lucky that Martha came to their town to serve as the program director of the YMCA of Rome/Floyd County in 1962. During her years in Rome, Martha served two terms on the board of the United Way as well as numerous terms on the Administrative Board of First Methodist Church, including as chair for 2 years. She also taught the Adult Sunday School class for 35 years, served 2 terms on the Alcohol Control Commission for the city of Rome, and was a part of the organizational committee that brought Georgia Highlands College to Rome.

Despite her volunteer schedule, she also found time to begin a brandnew business in 1972, Bryant and Garrett Travel, which she nurtured to its current status as a thriving, respected company. While she has just sold the business and retired from full-time service in 2009, I know Romans will still think of her first when they start to plan their family vacations.

Martha also is heavily involved with the Greater Rome Chamber of Commerce and has served in many leadership positions there over the years, including the chair of the Small Business Action Council. She is a graduate of Leadership Rome and became the first woman to serve as chair of the chamber in 1993. She continues to serve on the Governmental Affairs Committee and organizes the chamber's official visit to Washington, DC, each spring.

I hope Martha knows just what her leadership has meant to the many organizations she has touched and that she is able to enjoy a little more time with her grandkids and her beloved dachshunds at home.●

#### TRIBUTE TO MAJOR SHELIA FLOWERS

● Mr. ISAKSON. Madam President, I wish today to honor in the RECORD of the Senate MAJ Shelia Flowers of the U.S. Army Reserve on the eve of her promotion to the rank of lieutenant colonel.

Although Major Flowers was born and raised in North Carolina, her dedication to her country has ultimately lead her to call the State of Georgia her home as her parent command is the U.S. Army Reserve Command Headquarters in Ft. McPherson, GA.

Major Flowers was mobilized in support of Operation Noble Eagle in 2003 and has spent the last 6 years on Active Duty. In addition to her other tours, Major Flowers deployed in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom in 2006. Throughout her Active Duty period, she has served in the G-1 Directorate in support of Operation Noble Eagle. Additionally, Major Flowers was assigned to directly support Operation Enduring Freedom in November 2007.

In keeping with one of the tenets that sustains the Reserve Component, Major Flowers is dedicated to improving her community and the primary means through which she achieves this goal is by her membership in the Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, an organization that recently celebrated the 100th anniversary of its establishment.

In addition to her service to her country and community, Major Flowers is dedicated to her family. Her husband, LTC Eric Flowers, shares his wife's sense of duty and is currently deployed to the Horn of Africa. Their daughter, Cheyenne, currently resides in Atlanta.

I congratulate MAJ Shelia Flowers for her hard work and much-deserved promotion to lieutenant colonel, and I extend to her my sincere gratitude for her dedication to the defense of our Nation.●

#### MESSAGES FROM THE PRESIDENT

Messages from the President of the United States were communicated to the Senate by Mrs. Neiman, one of his secretaries.

#### EXECUTIVE MESSAGES REFERRED

As in executive session the Presiding Officer laid before the Senate messages from the President of the United States submitting a withdrawal and sundry nominations which were referred to the appropriate committees.

(The nominations received today are printed at the end of the Senate proceedings.)

#### MESSAGES FROM THE HOUSE

##### ENROLLED BILL SIGNED

At 4:49 p.m., a message from the House of Representatives, delivered by Mrs. Cole, one of its reading clerks, announced that the Speaker has signed the following enrolled bill:

S. 352. An act to postpone the DTV transition date.

The enrolled bill was subsequently signed by the President pro tempore (Mr. BYRD).

##### ENROLLED BILL PRESENTED

The Secretary of the Senate reported that on today, February 9, 2009, she had

presented to the President of the United States the following enrolled bill:

S. 352. An act to postpone the DTV transition date.

#### INTRODUCTION OF BILLS AND JOINT RESOLUTIONS

The following bills and joint resolutions were introduced, read the first and second times by unanimous consent, and referred as indicated:

By Mr. SCHUMER (for himself and Mr. CRAPO):

S. 394. A bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to provide the same capital gains treatment for art and collectibles as for other investment property and to provide that a deduction equal to fair market value shall be allowed for charitable contributions of literacy, musical, artistic, or scholarly compositions created by the donor; to the Committee on Finance.

By Mrs. FEINSTEIN (for herself, Mr. ALEXANDER, Mr. BENNETT, Mr. COCHRAN, Mr. KENNEDY, and Mr. SCHUMER):

S. 395. A bill to direct the Librarian of Congress and the Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution to carry out a joint project at the Library of Congress and the National Museum of African American History and Culture to collect video and audio recording of personal histories and testimonials of individuals who participated in the Civil Rights movement, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Rules and Administration.

By Mr. LEVIN:

S. 396. A bill for the relief of Marcos Antonio Sanchez-Diaz; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

By Mr. LEVIN:

S. 397. A bill for the relief of Anton Dodaj, Gjyljana Dodaj, Franc Dodaj, and Kristjan Dodaj; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

By Mr. CRAPO:

S. 398. A bill to permit commercial vehicles at weights up to 129,000 pounds to use certain highways of the Interstate System in the State of Idaho which would provide significant savings in the transportation of goods throughout the United States, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

By Mr. TESTER:

S. 399. A bill to amend the Truth in Lending Act to prohibit universal defaults on credit card accounts, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

By Mr. SANDERS (for himself, Mr. BROWN, and Mr. BEGICH):

S. 400. A bill to expand the authority and responsibilities of the Oversight Panel of the Troubled Asset Relief Program, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

By Mr. HARKIN (for himself and Mr. KOHL):

S. 401. A bill to amend the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974 to provide special reporting and disclosure rules for individual accounts plans and for other purposes; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

#### ADDITIONAL COSPONSORS

S. 21

At the request of Mr. REID, the name of the Senator from Vermont (Mr.