

This Week in Washington



WITH CONGRESSMAN
JO BONNER

Misplaced Priorities

Energy Prices

The one issue dominating the correspondence with my office is soaring gas prices. Day after day and week after week, gas prices break one record after another.

Currently, here at home gasoline is averaging \$3.95 per gallon, up a \$1.00 per gallon since this time last year.

Whether someone calls my office or sees me at the store – the same question so many of you have is – when is Congress going to take action to bring the cost of energy down?

Amazingly, the majority party, which sets the agenda for the House floor, has failed to bring any legislation providing meaningful energy solutions up for a vote on the House floor.

For each week the House is in session for the duration of the summer, House Republicans will use a parliamentary procedure known as a discharge petition to try to force the leadership to consider pending energy legislation geared at lowering energy prices.

Pending legislation, which has not been acted on for 30 consecutive days, can be brought directly to the House floor for a vote once 218 Members sign a discharge petition.

The bills my Republican colleagues and I are asking to be considered immediately are:

Â· **H.R. 3089, No More Excuses Energy Act of 2007**

o Opens new American oil refineries, invests in wind, nuclear, and clean coal-to-liquid technology, and opens the Arctic Energy Slope and America's Deep-Sea Energy Reserves to exploration.

Â· H.R. 2279, Expand American Refining Capacity at Closed Military Bases

- o Requires the president to open at least three closed military installations to be the site of new refineries.

Â· H.R. 5656, To Repeal the Ban on Acquiring Alternative Fuels

- o Allows the government to procure advanced alternative fuels from sources like oil shale, tar sands, and coal-to-liquid technology.

Â· H.R. 2208, Coal-to-Liquid Fuel Act

- o Encourages the use of coal-to-liquid technology and authorizes the secretary of energy to enter into loan agreements with coal-to-liquid projects that produce fuel.

Â· H.R. 2493, Fuel Mandate Reduction Act of 2007

- o Removes fuel blend requirements and onerous government mandates that contribute to high gas prices.

Â· H.R. 6107 – American Energy Independence and Price Reduction Act

- o Opens the Arctic Energy Slope to energy exploration that would be limited to 0.01% of the Refuge.

Â· H.R. 6108 – Deep Ocean Energy Resources Act of 2008

- o Allows coastal states the authority to drill 100 miles from their coastlines. It also allows the producing states to share in the revenues received.

I have cosponsored all of the above bills, which would help to bring down the price of fuel at the pump by at least by \$1.98, and I urge my colleagues to join with us in passing these worthy bills.

Intelligence Gathering

Another issue that continues to be ignored by the House Democratic majority is the Foreign Surveillance Act (FISA), a critical anti-terror law.

In February, due to inaction by this Congress, the temporary updates that modernized this 30 year old legislation were allowed to expire. The update, known as the Protect America Act, filled gaps and loopholes in the original, dated legislation.

A report in last week's New York Times said that government officials are already preparing for "worrisome gaps in intelligence" because of Congress's failure to act.

Officials are "preparing classified briefings for Congress on the intelligence 'degradation' they say could occur if" Congress does not act soon.

Our intelligence agencies must have the ability to monitor foreign, terrorist telephone calls and emails – without one hand tied behind our backs. Yet, it's more than 120 days later, and no action has been taken.

Troop Funding

The House majority also continues to ignore the fact that our troops are in desperate need of funding.

Defense Secretary Robert Gates has warned that delaying the passage of the emergency troop funding bill "may result in civilian furloughs, limits on training and curbing family support activities."

In order for the Army to meet its next military and civilian payroll, Congress last week had to reprogram, or shift, funds into Army accounts.

Early last week, Deputy Secretary Gordon England asked all military departments and agencies to begin planning for a possible shutdown.

The time for this House Democratic Majority to focus on the priorities of our nation is now. Our economy, our national security, and our troops in harm's way depend on it.

My staff and I work for you. If we can ever be of service, do not hesitate to call my office toll free at 1-800-288-8721.

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For release the week of Monday, June 16, 2008. For more information please contact Mike Lewis at (202)225-4931.