

for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. NEUGEBAUER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to encourage my colleagues to support the final conference report that was just brought to this House of the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008.

As a conferee, I participated in many hours of bipartisan and bicameral negotiations at which point we reached a bill that will be good for American agriculture, and it will be good for the American consumer.

Mr. Speaker, it is important that we have a strong agricultural industry in this country today. We've already seen the implications of having other countries furnish our energy needs on a daily basis, and the last thing in the world that we need to happen is to rely on other countries to feed and clothe the American people.

That's the reason, Mr. Speaker, it is so important that we get this important piece of legislation passed, sooner rather than later. Many producers all across America, farmers and ranchers, have already planted crops, and they do not have any policy to operate under.

And so I urge my colleagues, when this bill comes to the floor this week, to vote positively for American agriculture and the American people.

WAR SUPPLEMENTAL FUNDING

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

Mr. CULBERSON. Mr. Speaker, it is approximately 2:10 p.m. on the east coast, and in less than 24 hours, the Speaker of the House has announced that she is going to drop on this House floor a \$250 billion spending bill for the United States war against terror.

It has always been the policy of this Nation that party labels end at the water's edge. Until today, it has always been the policy of this House that the Members of this House were given the privilege and opportunity of debating in committee and offering amendments.

On legislation as important as funding a war for the survival of the American people and a war against barbarians from the Dark Ages, this House of Representatives has been shut out. It's appalling, it's embarrassing, it's outrageous, it's unacceptable for the Speaker of the House and the chairman of the Appropriations Committee to be the only two people in this institution allowed to see the bill. No one has seen the bill.

All 300 million Americans have been shut out of this appropriations process to fund our soldiers. To ensure their protection and survival in the field, to ensure the survival of this Nation, this entire House of Representatives needs to be involved, and the country needs to know that this Speaker is running this House like the Supreme Soviet.

PROPOSED AGREEMENT WITH RUSSIAN FEDERATION FOR COOPERATION IN THE FIELD OF PEACEFUL USES OF NUCLEAR ENERGY—MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES (H. DOC. NO. 110-112)

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following message from the President of the United States; which was read and, together with the accompanying papers, without objection, referred to the Committee on Foreign Affairs and ordered to be printed:

To the Congress of the United States:

I am pleased to transmit to the Congress, pursuant to sections 123b. and 123d. of the Atomic Energy Act of 1954, as amended (42 U.S.C. 2153(b), (d)) (the "Act"), the text of a proposed Agreement Between the Government of the United States of America and the Government of the Russian Federation for Cooperation in the Field of Peaceful Uses of Nuclear Energy. I am also pleased to transmit my written approval, authorization, and determination concerning the Agreement, and a Nuclear Proliferation Assessment Statement (NPAS) concerning the Agreement (in accordance with section 123 of the Act, as amended by title XII of the Foreign Affairs Reform and Restructuring Act of 1998 (Public Law 105-277), a classified annex to the NPAS, prepared by the Secretary of State in consultation with the Director of National Intelligence, summarizing relevant classified information, will be submitted to the Congress separately). The joint memorandum submitted to me by the Secretary of State and the Secretary of Energy and a letter from the Chairman of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission stating the views of the Commission are also enclosed.

The proposed Agreement has been negotiated in accordance with the Act and other applicable law. In my judgment, it meets all applicable statutory requirements and will advance the non-proliferation and other foreign policy interests of the United States.

The proposed Agreement provides a comprehensive framework for peaceful nuclear cooperation with Russia based on a mutual commitment to nuclear non-proliferation. It has a term of 30 years, and permits the transfer of technology, material, equipment (including reactors), and components for nuclear research and nuclear power production. It does not permit transfers of Restricted Data, and permits transfers of sensitive nuclear technology, sensitive nuclear facilities, and major critical components of such facilities by amendment to the Agreement. In the event of termination, key non-proliferation conditions and controls continue with respect to material and equipment subject to the Agreement.

The Russian Federation is a nuclear weapon state party to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. Like the United States, it has a

"voluntary offer" safeguards agreement with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). That agreement gives the IAEA the right to apply safeguards on all source or special fissionable material at peaceful nuclear facilities on a Russia-provided list. The Russian Federation is also a party to the Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material, which establishes international standards of physical protection for the use, storage, and transport of nuclear material. It is also a member of the Nuclear Suppliers Group, whose non-legally binding Guidelines set forth standards for the responsible export of nuclear commodities for peaceful use. A more detailed discussion of Russia's domestic civil nuclear program and its nuclear non-proliferation policies and practices, including its nuclear export policies and practices, is provided in the NPAS and in the classified annex to the NPAS submitted to the Congress separately.

I have considered the views and recommendations of the interested agencies in reviewing the proposed Agreement and have determined that its performance will promote, and will not constitute an unreasonable risk to, the common defense and security. Accordingly, I have approved the Agreement and authorized its execution and urge that the Congress give it favorable consideration.

This transmission shall constitute a submittal for purposes of both sections 123b. and 123d. of the Atomic Energy Act. My Administration is prepared to begin immediately the consultations with the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and House Foreign Affairs Committee as provided in section 123b. Upon completion of the 30-day continuous session period provided for in section 123b., the 60-day continuous session period provided for in section 123d. shall commence.

GEORGE W. BUSH.
THE WHITE HOUSE, May 12, 2008.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, the Chair will postpone further proceedings today on motions to suspend the rules on which a recorded vote or the yeas and nays are ordered, or on which the vote is objected to under clause 6 of rule XX.

Record votes on postponed questions will be taken after 6:30 p.m. today.

□ 1415

STRATEGIC PETROLEUM RESERVE FILL SUSPENSION AND CONSUMER PROTECTION ACT OF 2008

Mr. DINGELL. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 6022) to suspend the acquisition of petroleum for the Strategic Petroleum Reserve, and for other purposes.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 6022

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Strategic Petroleum Reserve Fill Suspension and Consumer Protection Act of 2008".

SEC. 2. SUSPENSION OF PETROLEUM ACQUISITION FOR STRATEGIC PETROLEUM RESERVE.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Except as provided in subsection (b) and notwithstanding any other provision of law, during the period beginning on the date of enactment of this Act and ending on December 31, 2008—

(1) the Secretary of the Interior shall suspend acquisition of petroleum for the Strategic Petroleum Reserve through the royalty-in-kind program; and

(2) the Secretary of Energy shall suspend acquisition of petroleum for the Strategic Petroleum Reserve through any acquisition method.

(b) RESUMPTION IN CALENDAR YEAR 2008.—During the period specified in subsection (a) but not earlier than 30 days after the date on which the President notifies Congress that the President has determined that the weighted average price of petroleum in the United States for the most recent 90-day period is \$75 or less per barrel—

(1) the Secretary of the Interior may resume acquisition of petroleum for the Strategic Petroleum Reserve through the royalty-in-kind program; and

(2) the Secretary of Energy may resume acquisition of petroleum for the Strategic Petroleum Reserve through any acquisition method.

(c) EXISTING CONTRACTS.—

(1) DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR CONTRACTS.—In the case of any royalty-in-kind oil scheduled to be delivered to the Department of Energy for the Strategic Petroleum Reserve pursuant to a contract entered into by the Secretary of Interior prior to, and in effect on, the date of enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Energy shall accept delivery of such oil.

(2) DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY CONTRACTS.—In the case of any oil scheduled to be delivered to the Strategic Petroleum Reserve pursuant to a contract entered into by the Secretary of Energy prior to, and in effect on, the date of enactment of this Act, the Secretary shall, to the maximum extent practicable, negotiate a deferral of the delivery of the oil in accordance with procedures of the Department of Energy in effect on the date of enactment of this Act for deferrals of oil.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. DINGELL) and the gentleman from Texas (Mr. BARTON) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Michigan.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. DINGELL. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks and to include extraneous material on the bill under consideration.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Michigan?

There was no objection.

Mr. DINGELL. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself 2 minutes.

Mr. Speaker, as you know, I have long supported filling the Strategic Pe-

troleum Reserve and strongly support the Energy Policy Act of 2005 provision that directed the Secretary of Energy to fill the reserve "as expeditiously as practicable" to the full 1 billion barrel capacity authorized by the Energy Policy and Conservation Act. The Energy Policy Act of 2005, however, also requires that the Secretary time SPR acquisitions in a manner that does not incur excessive costs or do not appreciably affect the consumer price of petroleum products.

On May 8, I wrote the President urging him to direct the Secretary of Energy not to enter into any new contracts to fill the SPR during calendar year 2008. This, regrettably, is what the Department of Energy has proposed to do under an April 4 solicitation for royalty-in-kind oil to be delivered between August and December of this year. In light of the record cost of oil and resulting hardship for average Americans, businesses, farmers, and the general economy, I believe it would be imprudent for DOE to take these barrels off the market.

While there is no guarantee that putting this oil onto the market rather than into the SPR will lower prices, even such a modest step could potentially prick the speculative bubble now characterizing oil markets. In 2006, DOE suspended filling SPR during the summer driving season, and that is what is appropriate for it to do now.

While it is in the discretion of DOE whether or not to enter into new contracts at this time, the administration seems determined to forge ahead. Common sense would say to us not to take the oil off the market at a time of record high prices. Given the administration's apparent determination to pursue this course, the Congress must act and I support this bill.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. BARTON of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I rise in opposition to the bill and recognize myself for such time as I may consume.

(Mr. BARTON of Texas asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. BARTON of Texas. Mr. Speaker, let me say at the beginning that I speak for myself, I don't necessarily speak for the House Republican leadership. I have asked if we had a minority position on the bill, and as of 30 minutes ago we did not. So I am speaking for myself as the ranking member of the committee of jurisdiction, the Energy and Commerce Committee.

And let me say at the beginning that I think it is good to have a piece of energy legislation on the floor at this point in time. I think the American people are fed up with high gasoline prices, they're fed up with increasing imports, they're fed up with rising food prices that are caused, at least in part, by higher energy prices. So I think it's a good thing that we are beginning to debate energy legislation on the floor of the House of Representatives. I

think it is a good thing that the chairman of the committee with primary jurisdiction, my good friend, JOHN DINGELL, is leading that debate on the majority side.

Having said that, I don't think it's a good thing that we bring a bill on the Strategic Petroleum Reserve to the floor with no process at all. Chairman DINGELL and Subcommittee Chairman BOUCHER and I have spoken informally in the last 2 weeks about doing something on the Strategic Petroleum Reserve. And I am very open to having a full vetting of the issue of the Strategic Petroleum Reserve.

I am fully supportive of the underlying policy in this bill, which is to suspend taking shipments into the Strategic Petroleum Reserve when oil prices are at record levels. I am not supportive of doing that in a way that there is absolutely no input from the minority side. We've had no legislative hearing, no committee hearing, no markup, no nothing. We were notified late yesterday afternoon that the bill would be on the floor this morning, and as far as I can tell the bill wasn't printed until some time this morning. So one reason I'm opposed to the bill is because of process.

Now I want to talk about the substance of the bill. Again, the Strategic Petroleum Reserve was created in the 1970s in response to a coordinated Arab Oil Embargo against the United States of America when shipments of oil were suspended by the OPEC cartel for political reasons. We created the Strategic Petroleum Reserve. And my guess is, although I wasn't in Congress at that time, that JOHN DINGELL, who was a member of the committee—I don't believe he was chairman in the seventies—probably had a very positive influence on creating the Strategic Petroleum Reserve. It was a good idea then and it's a good idea now. So that's a good thing.

Now, we have been filling the Strategic Petroleum Reserve since the late seventies. Most of the oil was put in under President Reagan's tenure from 1980 to 1988, but even since then we have continued to fill the Reserve. There have been little appropriated funds appropriated to fill it, and in the last 5 or 6 years most of the increase has been by taking what this bill would suspend, which is the royalty-in-kind oil, and putting that into the Reserve. Royalty-in-kind oil is oil that, instead of the oil companies that produce on Federal lands and the Federal OCS, instead of giving money to the Federal Government and to the taxpayer, they give royalty-in-kind oil. And that right now is about 62,000 barrels a day. So it is not a bad idea to suspend taking the royalty-in-kind oil.

Where I have a policy difference with this bill is that the bill is either silent or ambiguous on what happens to the royalties that continue to accrue. The fact that you're not taking oil doesn't mean that the Federal Government doesn't have a royalty that should be paid.

So one of the questions I would have is, do we receive the money, which 62,000 barrels of oil at \$120 a barrel is, over the life of this bill, over a billion dollars. What happens to that billion dollars? Does it just go to the general revenue? Does it just go to the general treasury?

If I were drafting the bill, I would direct that some of that royalty, in terms of cash, go into a LIHEAP fund for low-income heating and cooling assistance. I would direct that some of the funds go into a reserve to buy oil for the Strategic Petroleum Reserve when oil falls below the target price in this bill, which I believe is \$75 a barrel. I would direct that some of the funds go to an alternative energy fund. Those are things that we would have discussed in committee. Those were the things that we would have had amendments on. And those are the things that we're not allowed to do because this bill is being considered under suspension.

As Chairman DINGELL has pointed out, the fact that we're not going to take royalty-in-kind oil and put it in the Strategic Petroleum Reserve is probably not going to affect the price much on the world market. I think we would have as much impact on prices, if that's our goal, if all the Members on both sides of the aisle went out on the steps of the Capitol and we all clapped our hands three times and said, "Down prices. Down prices. Down prices." That would probably have as much impact as passing this bill. It would be a lot more fun, too. We would all get a little exercise. And it would be a pretty good photo op, the united Congress, you know, dictating that oil prices go down. But it would have about the same impact that this bill does.

So, Mr. Speaker, again, I don't quarrel with the fact that we are directing to suspend shipments of the Strategic Petroleum Reserve. We need to do a lot more than that, however, if we really want to bring oil prices down. And even in doing something on the SPR, I think we should go through committee, we should have a legislative hearing, we should have a markup, and we should really rethink the strategy of the Strategic Petroleum Reserve.

In the 1970s, the oil markets and the U.S. economy were significantly different than they are today. And the size of the Reserve, the uses of the Reserve are at least subject to a real debate today. And what we're getting is a bill that apparently was drafted in Majority Leader HOYER's office late last night or early this morning that several Members have put their names on. And we're on a suspension calendar that we have no ability to amend it or do anything about it except vote "yes" or "no," so I'm going to encourage Members to vote "no." If we were somehow to get 146 "no" votes, then we could have the debate and have the markup process that I've asked about and we could come back next week sometime and do it the right way.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in opposition to H.R. 6022, the Strategic Petroleum Reserve Fill Suspension and Consumer Protection Act of 2008. I am opposed to this bill for two reasons: process and substance.

First, let's talk about process: I found out that this bill was going to be on the floor today less than 24 hours ago. I am the ranking member of the Energy and Commerce Committee, which has jurisdiction over energy in general and the Strategic Petroleum Reserve, SPR, in particular. While there has been a lot of talk and press recently about the SPR, it has not been the subject of any committee briefings, hearings, or markups at all. I am not even aware of any discussions about this SPR bill at the staff level, except for Chairman DINGELL's staff notifying my staff yesterday afternoon that this bill would be on the suspension calendar today.

And now we are on the suspension calendar, where we get an up or down vote, with no chance for any amendments. It seems that, once again, the majority leadership of the House is shamelessly dictating the legislative process of the House in a way that demeans the jurisdiction of the Energy & Commerce Committee in order to make us vote on a bill before Memorial Day so the Democrats can send out press releases about how they are addressing the Pelosi Premium.

Which leads me to my second point—the substance of this bill. When it comes to dealing with high energy prices, there are two groups in Congress. Those who want to say they are doing something, and those who want to do something. Today's bill is for those who want to say they are doing something.

This bill tells the President, as long as oil prices stay above \$75 a barrel, to quit filling the SPR for the rest of calendar year 2008, but do it in a way that does not affect current contracts. So, if this bill is signed into law, the real world effect will be to prevent about 11.4 million barrels of oil from going into the SPR between August 1 and December 31 of this year—or about 76 thousand barrels a day for the rest of the year.

Will this help with gas prices? We could probably have more effect on lowering gas prices if we stood on the steps of the Capitol and clapped our hands three times and shouted, "Lower, lower, lower." It certainly won't do anything for prices for Memorial Day weekend because it will not start having any effect until August 1st. If the Majority wanted to have an immediate effect, they should have considered a provision to direct the Department of Energy to sell the SPR oil it is currently receiving into the open market.

The title of this bill also indicates that it somehow protects consumers, but I cannot find anything in the bill that actually does that. The bill says to quit filling the SPR which would happen in August, but the bill is silent about a number of things: What happens to the Royalty-in-Kind oil that the Departments of Interior and Energy are currently getting? Do these departments sell it? Do the lessees sell it and give the proceeds to the Departments? I assume the lessees still owe the government the royalty payments, so I assume any cash would go into the general treasury. How does this help protect consumers?

A better way to protect consumers, or at least help consumers by offsetting the current record energy prices would have been to do something useful with the revenue generated

with the SPR oil. Perhaps we could have dedicated a portion of it to low income heating assistance. Or perhaps we could have dedicated a portion of it to developing alternative energy sources. Or, we even could have reserved a portion of it to start replenishing the SPR again sometime in the future when oil prices are not at \$125 a barrel.

But, since we had no process for this bill, we will never know what could have been. We're faced with an up or down vote, with no chance to discuss the policy of either this bill, or the policy of the SPR generally.

I, for one, am in favor of having a policy discussion on the entire Strategic Petroleum Reserve. I think the circumstances of today's energy markets are much different than they were when we created the SPR, and therefore I think it would be a good idea to have a policy debate about the future of the SPR. Ultimately I may end up wanting to continue to have a billion barrel SPR, but I think the policy discussion would be a good thing to have. Unfortunately, the process for this bill does not foster such a debate.

So where does this leave those of who want to not just say we're doing something about energy costs, but actually want to do something?

In 1985 we produced 9 million barrels of oil per day and imported another 3 million per day. Since 1995 we've cut our domestic production in half and tripled our imports. Why? Because we continue to lock up our domestic resources, particularly in Alaska and in the OCS.

Two of the most unstable foreign sources of oil today are Nigeria and Venezuela. That instability is a big factor in high oil prices because of the risk of supply cut-off. ANWR alone could be replacing all our imports from Venezuela or all our imports from Nigeria and only use a few thousand acres of a vast tundra.

Better legislation comes from the deliberative process, a process that's inclusive. No sooner will this bill become law than people will be either calling for its repeal or wondering why we bothered at all. But that was true of the 2007 no-energy bill, as well.

Let's go back to Committee and do the job we are capable of doing with SPR. Let it do some good for somebody. And let's let Congress turn to the real energy issue facing this country, domestic production.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. DINGELL. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent at this time that the gentleman from Vermont (Mr. WELCH) be permitted to control the remainder of the time on this side.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Michigan?

There was no objection.

Mr. WELCH of Vermont. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

First, I want to thank Chairman DINGELL for his leadership on energy issues and for assisting in bringing this legislation to the floor for consideration by the full House.

I want to address a couple of observations by my friend from Texas. Number one, the revenues that would be generated from drilling on Federal lands

would go into the Treasury. And there are many uses and debates that can be had about whether that money ultimately should go into alternative energy, whether it should go into LIHEAP, and those will all be had in due course as part of other legislation.

The question that we have before us today is whether or not taking a small step that in the past has been taken by this President Bush, by his father, by President Clinton, that when it has been taken has proven to actually have a direct and immediate impact on lowering the price of gas at the pump from 5 cents to 25 cents a gallon.

All of us know, we're going home every weekend and we're hearing from our constituents. It doesn't matter what district we're in, it doesn't matter what part of the country we're from, folks are really feeling burdened by these ever-escalating home energy heating bills and the cost of filling up their pick-up truck and their car. And basically the question for us is whether or not, even as we have to proceed with long-term debates about our future energy policy, this Congress is going to be willing to take a short-term step that has the potential to bring down energy prices.

You know, we could go out and clap, but I actually think this would be more effective. History tells us that, in fact, when we've used this Strategic Petroleum Reserve as an asset belonging to the American people and suspended purchases—and incidentally, this Strategic Petroleum Reserve is nearly full, we're talking about topping it off, it's very expensive to do so now with \$126 per barrel oil—that when we've done it in the past, it has actually reduced that pump price. And just two examples of what it would mean in my small State of Vermont. I talked to a trucker from Barre, Vermont; they've got a company and drive a lot. It would put \$300,000 on his bottom line if the price of gas went down 25 cents. A school district in a rural area, it would be \$30,000 off their bottom line if we could get the price down 25 cents.

No one here is suggesting that this is an answer to our energy situation. What we are suggesting—and, really, recommendations on a bipartisan basis—is that the tool that's within our reach we should use and do all we can on a short-term basis even as we debate long-term energy policies.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. BARTON of Texas. Mr. Speaker, if it's possible, I'd like to enter into a dialogue with any of the three sponsors of the bill. Mr. MARKEY is on the floor. Mr. LAMPSON is on the floor. Mr. WELCH is on the floor. I'd like to ask them some questions if one of them would like to try to respond on my time. I'm not going to use their time. So Mr. MARKEY, Mr. WELCH or Mr. LAMPSON. I just want to ask some questions about the bill to the main sponsors.

□ 1430

My question, Mr. Speaker, and this is on my time, if either of those three gentlemen would like to respond. I'm not trying to be cute. I'm way too old to be cute.

The bill is silent on whether or not the money that is the equivalent cash of the royalty in kind to oil is what's done with it. So my first question I would like one of the sponsors to answer is, instead of getting 62,000 barrels of oil a day, if this bill becomes law, does the general treasury get the equivalent of 62,000 barrels of oil times whatever the market price of oil that day is, which right now is over \$120 a barrel? Is that revenue generated, and does it come to the Federal treasury, or do the oil companies keep it? That's my first question.

Mr. MARKEY. Mr. Speaker, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. BARTON of Texas. I would be happy to yield to my good friend from Massachusetts.

Mr. MARKEY. Thank you very much for yielding.

The money actually goes back to the general Treasury.

Mr. BARTON of Texas. It goes back to the general Treasury. All right.

And my next question is the bill's effective date is upon termination of the contract. I think it goes into effect on July 31 and it runs through December 31 of 2008; is that correct?

Mr. MARKEY. That is correct, yes.

Mr. BARTON of Texas. What happens after December 31, 2008?

Mr. MARKEY. Well, at that point we return to operations as they exist today.

Mr. BARTON of Texas. My next question is, if this bill were to become law, does the Secretary of Energy or the Secretary of the Interior have any discretion about accepting royalty in kind to oil or the cash equivalent, or is it a flat suspension with no exceptions?

Mr. MARKEY. It is a flat suspension.

Mr. BARTON of Texas. I thank my good friend from Massachusetts for those answers.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. WELCH of Vermont. Mr. Speaker, just in response, as a clarification for my friend from Texas, my understanding of the bill is we will continue to accept and will honor contracts during that 45-day period for royalty in kind.

Mr. Speaker, at this time I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. MARKEY).

Mr. MARKEY. I thank the gentleman very much for yielding.

This is an historic debate. The history is quite clear. At the point of which President Bush was sworn in as President in January of 2001, as a renowned oil industry veteran, the price of a barrel of oil was \$30. Today, as we are now in the eighth year of the President's term of office, it is \$126 a barrel, an historic high, nearly a quadrupling of the price of a barrel of oil.

Other interesting facts: On the day that the President was sworn in, again, as President, gas was \$1.45 a gallon, the good old days when the Bush administration was sworn into office. Today it has hit a record high of \$3.72, on average, for self serve regular. So that is something else that is quite dramatically negative in terms of the impact on American consumers.

Now, here's what has happened over the years with the Strategic Petroleum Reserve. Back in 1991 President Bush's father actually deployed the Strategic Petroleum Reserve, and the price of a barrel of oil dropped 33 percent. In 2000 President Clinton deployed the Strategic Petroleum Reserve, and the price of a barrel of oil went down 18 percent. In fact, President Bush himself deployed the Strategic Petroleum Reserve in 2005, which led to a 5.6 percent drop in the price of a barrel of oil.

Now, this is an interesting U-turn that the President has taken because what he said in 2006 was—

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman's time has expired.

Mr. WELCH of Vermont. Mr. Speaker, I yield an additional 1½ minutes to the gentleman from Massachusetts.

Mr. MARKEY. I thank the gentleman.

What the President said, President Bush said, in April 25, 2006, was, "I have directed the Department of Energy to defer filling the Strategic Petroleum Reserve this summer. So by deferring deposits until the fall, we will leave a little more oil on the market. Every little bit helps." The price of a barrel of oil when President Bush said that in 2006: \$67 a barrel.

Now here's what the President said as of April 29, just 2 weeks ago, in 2008. He said: "In this case, I have analyzed the Strategic Petroleum Reserve issue, and I don't think it would affect the price."

Well, that's a surprising change of economic analysis by the President in just 2 years. And as we debate this out here on the House floor, he seems to find himself in the minority because, in fact, what the President has at his disposal is the ability to be able to do something about this issue.

As consumers get the shakedown at the pump, this Friday President Bush is going to meet with the sheiks in Saudi Arabia to ask for more oil. And while the President sent troops to the Middle East to look for weapons of mass destruction, he's avoiding using a weapon of price reduction here at home. The President has said he does not have a magic wand to wave away high gas prices, but he does carry a big stick. It's called the Strategic Petroleum Reserve.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman's time has again expired.

Mr. WELCH of Vermont. Mr. Speaker, I yield the gentleman another 15 seconds.

Mr. MARKEY. I thank the gentleman.

So here is the checklist right now to turn on the spigot of the Strategic Petroleum Reserve: OBAMA, yes; CLINTON,

yes; MCCAIN, yes; George Bush, no. He's saying "no" to the American consumer, "no" to the American economy. It is a dangerous economic position for our country to be in.

Mr. BARTON of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I am going to recognize Mr. SHIMKUS, a member of the committee.

But before I do that, I just want the record to show that the last day that I was chairman of the Energy and Commerce Committee, the price of gasoline in my district was \$2 a gallon.

Mr. Speaker, I recognize the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. SHIMKUS) for 3 minutes, a member of the committee.

(Mr. SHIMKUS asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. SHIMKUS. Battling charge, that's what I like. Finally we get to talk about supply.

Mr. Speaker, for 18 months I have been coming to the floor to talk about the importance of bringing more supply to our economy so that prices would go down.

Finally we have it, and I want to thank you for making the point. If you want to lower the cost, you've got to bring on supply.

It was \$58 a barrel when your majority came into power, \$58. What is it today? It's \$126.

What has it done? I'm glad my friend talked about gas prices. It wasn't George Bush who promised to lower gas prices. It was Speaker PELOSI in 2006, STENY HOYER in 2006, JIM CLYBURN in 2006, who said, "We have a plan to lower gas prices." That's their quote. I have said it here 20 times here on this floor. "We have a plan."

They've got a plan all right. It's not to lower gas prices; it's to raise gas prices.

What has happened to a gallon of gas? It was \$2.33 when this majority came in. What is it today? It is \$3.77. Now my colleague from Massachusetts brings on climate change for a 50 cent additional tax per gallon of gas, per the chairman of the Commerce Committee. We would be paying \$4.27 for a gallon of gas. That's not the type of change we need. We need to bring on supply.

I thank you for finally coming to the floor and recognizing that if we bring on just some barrels more supply, you guys say we're going to lower prices 5 cents to 25 cents. Well, let's multiply that by bringing on a million barrels of crude oil into our supply. Where do we get that? We can get billions of barrels of crude oil from coal-to-liquid technologies right in the heartland, right in Southern Illinois, Fischer-Tropsch Technology, established in the World War II generation, currently developed by a South African oil company.

And one of my personal favorites is the Outer Continental Shelf. Billions of barrels of oil on the eastern seaboard, on the western seaboard, on the eastern gulf coast. Trillions of cubic feet of natural gas.

What's your policy? Let's don't go there. Oh, yes, let's settle for a little

bit of oil out of the SPR and claim great victory for lowering prices when we could have billions of barrels of oil, trillions of cubic feet of natural gas if we just went to the Outer Continental Shelf, if we just went to the eastern gulf, if we just used coal-to-liquid technologies, a bipartisan bill Congressman BOUCHER and I would like to take.

We are the number one coal country in the world. So let's don't settle for a half step. This is good. We can do much better.

Mr. WELCH of Vermont. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Texas (Mr. LAMPSON).

Mr. LAMPSON. I thank the gentleman for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, I first want to thank the leadership of both Chairman DINGELL and Ranking Member BARTON on what is being done and has been done for a long time with the Strategic Petroleum Reserve in making sure that it stays strong and effective for us at a time that we do need it and will need it. And I think that if we keep cool heads and look for simple ways that we can reach and try to find commonsense solutions to some of the problems that we face, then we're going to have a good solution to those problems.

And we are taking one step today. That's all. One of hopefully many to try to curb the price of gasoline for the American consumer and invest in alternative energy research to provide for the long-term energy solutions that we're going to need. Many of these things are going to be required for us to get the price of gasoline down to the point where we're going to be comfortable again, and let's hope that we accomplish it.

This bill directs the President to suspend shipments to the Strategic Petroleum Reserve through the end of the year or until prices drop below \$75 a barrel.

High oil prices are straining family budgets at the pump, and we know that they're driving prices up on groceries and other household goods. And families are starting to rethink even summer vacations, and it's going to have a negative impact on so many of our communities that depend on tourism. This ripple effect, well, from the high price of gasoline and diesel, there's going to be a touch to every family, to every industry, to every person, to every business in the United States and even around the globe.

Not realizing the urgency of this situation is naive. Consumers need lower prices now, not later. This bill provides a quick first step, maybe not much, but at least it's an action on the part of our Congress.

When I first introduced similar legislation affecting the Strategic Petroleum Reserve back in January, gas was \$3.11 a gallon. Now it's \$3.73 a gallon. It has gone up 11 cents in the last week. And if the President turns a blind eye to the needs of the American people, we may see gasoline go to \$5, \$6, or \$7 a gallon.

Consider this: The Strategic Petroleum Reserve has been tapped and suspended four times by the last three Presidents.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman's time has expired.

Mr. WELCH of Vermont. Mr. Speaker, I yield another 30 seconds to the gentleman from Texas.

Mr. LAMPSON. In 2000, as we have already heard, the prices fell by one-third, and they stayed low. Suspending the SPR will put an additional 70,000 barrels of oil on the market each day. It could help reduce prices at a critical time for us in our economy.

This action has widespread bipartisan support. It was supported by a near unanimous support by the Senate this morning. I got a letter a few minutes ago from the American Trucking Association saying that the additional \$391 million that truckers are having to pay for diesel cannot be handled by them for long.

So I'm pleased that we are taking at least the first step. And I am looking forward to introducing other legislation later this week that's going to provide additional relief to consumers to provide and invest in our energy independence through research and development.

□ 1445

Mr. BARTON of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I am going to yield myself 1 minute.

I want to just comment on what I think is the goal of the legislation, and that would be to lower prices for the American consumer. At least I think that is what I think the goal is.

Having said that, 62,000 barrels a day in an 85-million-barrel-a-day oil market is about one twelve hundredth of 1 percent. So if you assume that oil markets are linear, the additional 62,000 barrels on an 85-million-barrel-per-day oil market is going to lower the price perhaps two cents. Maybe.

Again, if we just go outside and clap our hands, we would probably have a 2 percent chance of lowering the price of oil by two cents a barrel. Just by clapping our hands. So I don't think this bill does anything except show the American people that we want to do something, but we still don't know exactly what it is we can do that makes any sense.

And I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. WELCH. I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. ALTMIRE).

Mr. ALTMIRE. I thank the gentleman.

Mr. Speaker, we get criticized a lot in this Congress for not taking a proactive approach to issues that we see facing the country. And here is an example of something where we are working together in a bipartisan way. The comments from my friend from Texas notwithstanding, this is an issue that has bipartisan support. And we can argue about how much is this going to save the American people. How much is this going to take off of a

gallon of gas? And Goldman Sachs, a group that knows something about the market certainly and the impact that the Strategic Petroleum Reserve will have on the market, says it can be upwards of 25 cents a gallon that this saves.

Now that is not a long-term solution. We understand that. And we can have the argument about whether we should drill off the coast or drill in ANWR and increase supplies in other ways or build more refineries. That is a long-term argument. What we are doing today is taking a short-term approach that is going to help families today.

We cannot continue to do nothing. This Congress has to act. And we are going to act today. And we are going to save the American people a quarter on the gallon.

Mr. BARTON of Texas. I yield myself 1 additional minute.

I would like to ask the speaker who just spoke if he can show me the economic study by Goldman Sachs that says that suspending shipments is going to lower prices 25 cents a gallon. It won't even lower prices a penny a barrel. Is there a study?

I believe that there is no study. And I guarantee you, this just won't lower prices 25 cents.

Mr. LAMPSON. Would the gentleman yield?

Mr. BARTON of Texas. I would be happy to yield to my good friend from Texas.

Mr. LAMPSON. I don't know if we have a specific study that can show it, but I can tell you the people that we have been working with over the last several months from places like MIT who have come and asked us to consider this legislation, they are saying that historically we have seen prices drop when actions like this have been taken. If we can try, at least we are doing something that may put it in the right direction. We have additional legislation that is going to be proposed.

Mr. BARTON of Texas. I sure hope so.

Mr. LAMPSON. And I hope you will join me as a cosponsor of that legislation.

Mr. BARTON of Texas. I yield myself 30 additional seconds just to respond to my good friend, Mr. LAMPSON.

I do not oppose suspension of oil shipments into the Strategic Petroleum Reserve. But to say that that, by itself, is going to lower prices 25 cents a gallon in an 85-million-barrel-a-day oil market is ludicrous.

I sure hope that there is additional legislation besides this feel-good legislation. I hope it is bipartisan. I hope it is substantive. And I hope it has a supply component to it.

Mr. WELCH of Vermont. I recognize the gentleman from Colorado (Mr. PERLMUTTER) for 1 minute.

Mr. PERLMUTTER. Thank you, Mr. WELCH.

To the gentleman from Texas, I don't think there could be anything simpler than deciding during this busy driving season to stop buying oil or placing oil

in the Strategic Petroleum Reserve. And I quote your Senator from Texas, Senator KAY BAILEY HUTCHISON, a month ago said, "I support an immediate halt in deposits of domestic crude into the SPR as we enter the busiest driving season of the year."

So I agree with Mr. SHIMKUS. This is just one of many things that has to be done. And we have done a number of those already. We have added mileage so we have better fuel economy. We passed a law against price gouging. We are pushing other sources of energy through biomass and a whole variety of things. This is going to take a lot of work across the board. But this is a very simple and very direct action we are taking. We need to take it today. This is simple. H.R. 6022 should be passed.

And I ask for an "aye" vote.

Mr. BARTON of Texas. I want to yield 2 minutes to the distinguished Congressman from the great State of Connecticut (Mr. SHAYS).

Mr. SHAYS. I thank the gentleman very much. When I hear how partisan some of my colleagues have gotten on the other side of the aisle, it really astonishes me that somehow it is the President's fault. The clear fact is that we had better find a way to work together, because in my judgment, we have a challenge because we are not working together, Republicans or Democrats. We all have our fingers on this. And we need to deal with it.

It seems to me we need to conserve and not use so much energy to reduce demand. We also need to increase production. It is going to include alternative fuels, renewable fuel. It is going to include mining the outer slope of the continental shelf. It may include nuclear power. It is going to require increasing production and reducing demand.

I think this legislation, while it is a drop in the bucket, it is a step that we need to take. But it will have minimal impact. But in the end, we can fight as much as we want to about this issue, and we are going to fool no one.

There are basic laws of supply and demand that are coming into play here. And we don't seem to want to address it. When I vote not to mine ANWR, I know I am not adding to production. I am not voting to do that for a variety of reasons because I want us to conserve more. But when we conserve more, then we are going to have to look at other ways to increase the supply. T. Boone Pickens is saying we basically consume about 86 million barrels, and we are producing just about that level. We are going to have to produce more and consume less.

So I would just make this concluding point. My Democratic colleagues won this Congress. And you are in charge. And I have seen prices continue to climb. It is not necessarily your fault. But you have your fingers on this as much as anyone else.

Mr. WELCH of Vermont. Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. EMANUEL) for 2 minutes.

Mr. EMANUEL. Mr. Speaker, picking up on what my colleague from Connecticut said, which is nobody says this is a panacea, but all experience shows, both the Harvard study and the Department of Energy study, shows that about 20 percent, which would be about \$25 a barrel drop in price, would occur because of this.

There is plenty of blame to go around. Nobody is suggesting this is going to resolve the energy crisis. It is a short-term alleviation of high prices that would, in fact, allow us to take the steps that we have not taken for 20 years.

And also in the last 5 or 6 years, when the Vice President derided conservation, you acknowledged on the floor the importance of conservation. It was dismissed as part of our arsenal in our energy policy. When those of us who talked about investing in new alternative energy, wind, solar, thermal, it was also dismissed, and continues to not only be dismissed, but vetoed. That, too, is unilateral disarmament by the United States.

So you are right. There is plenty of blame to go around. But there are plenty of solutions to also be picked up. Conservation was denied as a national policy. And we have paid the price as a country. Alternative energy was denied and denied for years and issued veto threats by the President of the United States. And we pay the price because of that policy.

This is a short-term solution, \$25, which means a lot to Americans, a barrel, but it gives us the breathing space to do what we need to do and take care of America's energy independence.

Now no one is going to claim that in 2005 when you all did pass your energy bill, let me quote your minority leader, "the Energy Policy Act of 2005 is a balanced, bipartisan bill that will lower energy prices to consumers and spur our economy." Nobody is claiming that. This gives a short-term alleviation to allow us to tackle a problem that has been festering for 25 years and denying what all of us should have done in Washington, invest in long-term, alternative energy and technologies that will give America its leg of independence, as well as adopt an energy policy of conservation, it would also save.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The time of the gentleman from Illinois has expired.

Mr. WELCH of Vermont. I yield the gentleman 30 additional seconds.

Mr. EMANUEL. That is the strategy we are talking about. This is the right thing to do. It has been proven that when we have instrumented this tool, that is to stop purchasing from the Strategic Petroleum Reserve, that in fact there will be immediate reduction in the prices at the pump and also a barrel of energy. That is the right thing to do.

But let there be no mistake. In every step of the way for the last 6 years, the President of the United States has either issued veto threats or leaned on

only one side of the policy, and that policy was dig, dig, dig. In fact, there are 9,300 licenses to drill here in the United States that the energy companies are not using.

Mr. BARTON of Texas. Mr. Speaker, could I inquire how much time is remaining in the debate?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from Texas has 2 minutes remaining. The gentleman from Vermont has 3-¾ minutes remaining.

Mr. BARTON of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself 30 seconds.

To the extent we have an historical record on what this would do, on April 25, 2006, President Bush announced suspension of 67,000-barrels-a-day acquisition for the SPR for the summer driving season. The day before he made that announcement, the price of oil was \$70.19. The day he made the announcement, it fell to \$67.43 per barrel. And the day after he made the announcement, it went back up to \$71.71 per barrel, which was a net increase of 62 cents a barrel. So to say that this is going to lower the price based on the historical record would be inaccurate.

Mr. WELCH of Vermont. I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. MARKEY).

Mr. MARKEY. I thank the gentleman.

So here is where we are. There is something that President Bush can do right now to give relief to consumers at the pump after being shaken upside down and have money shaken out of their pockets as they refill their tank. President Bush said in 2006 that every little bit helps. We know it is not a panacea, but every little bit helps. Today he is saying, I am sorry. I am just going to go over and meet with sheiks in Saudi Arabia and ask them to please give us more oil that we can buy from them.

We should be more aggressive. One, stop filling at 70,000 barrels a day; two, stop drilling 70,000 barrels a day and you will see a huge change on the open market.

OBAMA says "yes." CLINTON says "yes." MCCAIN says "yes." President Bush still says "no." Vote "yes" on the Welch resolution to ensure that the American consumer is protected at the pump.

Mr. BARTON of Texas. Mr. Speaker, how much time do I have remaining?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from Texas has 1-½ minutes remaining.

Mr. BARTON of Texas. I am going to yield myself 1 minute.

I want my friends on the majority side to listen, because at the end of this, I am going to ask for a unanimous consent request. And this is language that we have shared with the majority staff.

I am going to offer a unanimous consent request that at the end of the bill, insert the following new section:

Section 3. Use of Funds.

The Secretary of the Interior shall transfer to the Secretary of Energy an

amount equal to the value of the petroleum that would have been deposited in the Strategic Petroleum Reserve from royalty-in-kind payments but for the suspension required under section 2(a)(1). Such amount shall be available for obligation by the Secretary of Energy without further appropriation as follows:

(1) 50 percent shall be retained for future acquisition of petroleum products for the Strategic Petroleum Reserve during any period when the price of oil is less than \$75 per barrel.

(2) 25 percent shall be transferred to the Secretary of Health and Human Services as an additional amount for use in carrying out the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Act of 1981.

(3) 25 percent shall be available for use by the Secretary of Energy to carry out alternative energy projects the Secretary is authorized by law to carry out.

Mr. Speaker, I would ask unanimous consent that this be added to the bill. And if it is, I will vote for the bill.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair will entertain that request from the manager of the motion.

□ 1500

Mr. WELCH of Vermont. Mr. Speaker, my understanding is that we can't amend the bill at this stage, and that this is a question for the Speaker.

Mr. BARTON of Texas. Mr. Speaker, it's a unanimous consent request, and the body can work its will by unanimous consent at any time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The proper manner in which to amend a motion to suspend the rules would be to withdraw the motion and resubmit it in amended form.

Mr. BARTON of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I am not asking that we withdraw the bill. I am just asking unanimous consent to add this to the bill, and we shared the language with the majority staff.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair will entertain such a request only from the manager.

Mr. WELCH of Vermont. Mr. Speaker, not having had an opportunity to review this, only hearing the recitation of it from my friend from Texas, not having any awareness as to whether this has been scored by the CBO, as has the underlying bill, I am not prepared to give unanimous consent to the gentleman's offer and would object at this time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The manager does not enter such a request.

Mr. BARTON of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY

Mr. WELCH of Vermont. A point of inquiry. The ruling of the Chair is that that proposed amendment was not in order?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair would entertain a request for unanimous consent request to amend only from a manager of the motion.

Mr. WELCH of Vermont. I am not making a request for unanimous consent.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. That disposes of the matter.

Mr. WELCH of Vermont. Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. BARTON of Texas. Mr. Speaker, how much time do I have remaining?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from Texas has 30 seconds.

Mr. BARTON of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself the balance of my time.

Mr. Speaker, I want to reiterate once more, I am not opposed to the generic policy of suspending shipments in the Strategic Petroleum Reserve. I am opposed to doing it with no input from the minority and absolutely no process and no alternatives made in order to amend the specific language, which we just tried to do, which wasn't allowed.

I do hope that this is the start of a serious effort to look at our strategic energy policy for this country. But for this bill, I would ask for a "no" vote.

Mr. WELCH of Vermont. Mr. Speaker, how much time do I have?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from Vermont has 2¾ minutes remaining.

Mr. WELCH of Vermont. Mr. Speaker, I want to answer a few questions that were raised by my friend from Texas. First of all, the question is how, when it's such a small amount of oil, 70,000 barrels a day, can suspending purchases have an impact on the price?

There are two things, number one, history has shown that when the Federal Government, on behalf of the consumers of this country and the small businesses, have used this Strategic Petroleum Reserve to help alleviate market pressures. It's worked, and the previous speakers have recited how it happened with this President Bush, the prior President Bush and President Clinton. We have history as a guide that says taking this action does work.

Second, the reason it works is that one of the problems we have in the oil market is speculation. There was legislation passed in 2002 by Congress that included a loophole that allowed the deregulation of the energy futures trading market, and there is enormous evidence, that that has allowed hedge funds and arbitrageurs and speculators to impose a premium in the cost of each barrel of oil and in the cost of a gallon of gas.

The fact is, if the Federal Government is showing, particularly on a bipartisan basis, that we are going to use the levers that we have, even in a short-term way, to protect the consumer against the speculator, then that has a chastening impact on speculation and helps bring the price down.

Third, the process. My friend from Texas is the distinguished ranking member of that committee, but this issue about the Strategic Petroleum Reserve is well worn. In fact, it's been used before, as I mentioned, so it's not all that complicated. We are doing it only for the period of 2008 in respect to the wishes of the chairman.

The Senate has passed the Reid-Dorgan amendment by 97-1, essentially the

very same proposal that we are considering today. The bottom line is this, will we take the short-term actions that it's within our reach to take that have a proven capacity to help the consumer?

I urge a "yes" vote on the bill.

Mrs. CAPPS. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of H.R. 6022, the Strategic Petroleum Reserve Fill Suspension and Consumer Protection Act of 2008, which will temporarily suspend filling the Nation's Strategic Petroleum Reserve, SPR.

Paying top dollar to fill the SPR is a poor use of precious taxpayer dollars, particularly when there's no pressing need to add additional petroleum to the reserve at this time.

What's more, experts say that temporarily suspending the fill of the SPR is something that can be done right now to immediately lower gas prices for American families.

As oil and gas prices continue to climb to new record highs and with the summer driving season approaching, consumers are in dire need of immediate relief from skyrocketing prices at the pump.

Over the last 6 years, the price of oil has risen by nearly \$100 and gas prices have more than tripled.

According to recent projections by the Energy Department, consumers are likely to face even higher prices at the pump this summer. They project that gas prices could rise to above \$4.00 per gallon during the summer driving season.

Despite these record energy prices, the U.S. is currently taking 70,000 barrels of oil a day off the market to continue filling the SPR. Moreover, the Energy Department recently announced plans to increase this SPR fill rate to 76,000 barrels per day before the end of the summer.

Mr. Speaker, this just doesn't make any sense.

Even President Bush has suspended SPR purchases in order to lower fuel prices. In April 2006, President Bush said:

I've directed the Department of Energy to defer filling the reserve this summer. Our strategic reserve is sufficiently large enough to guard against any major supply disruption over the next few months. So by deferring deposits until the fall, we'll leave a little more oil on the market. Every little bit helps.

Well, the President was right about something: every little bit does help. It's time to halt filling the SPR.

What's surprising is that now President Bush is rejecting bipartisan calls from Congress to once again suspend filling the SPR. It's curious that the President would now reject a sound proposal that he once embraced even though gas prices are now at record highs. In the absence of the President's leadership, the Democratic Congress is stepping in to force the administration to do the right thing and suspend filling the SPR.

Allowing more oil to reach the market will send a signal to oil speculators and will provide the type of immediate, targeted relief that we need right now.

I urge all of my colleagues to support H.R. 6022, to help American families with skyrocketing gas prices.

Mr. RAHALL. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 6022, the Strategic Petroleum Reserve Fill Suspension and Consumer Protection Act of 2008.

At a time when crude oil is over \$120 a barrel, it makes absolutely no sense for the Federal Government to continue purchasing massive quantities of oil in order to stick it in a hole in the ground for safe-keeping.

Under the current situation, the Federal Government is buying oil at record-high prices to fill the Strategic Petroleum Reserve at the rate of 70,000 barrels a day. These daily purchases create additional pressure on demand and further inflate prices at the pump. The Strategic Petroleum Reserve is roughly 97 percent full right now. We do not need to pay a premium to the oil companies just to top it off.

In addition to the obvious economic reasons to suspend filling the Reserve now, the Federal Government should not use oil taken as a "Royalty-In-Kind", RIK, from oil and gas production in the Federal waters of the Gulf of Mexico to fill the Reserve. By way of background, RIK is one of two methods used by the Government to collect the taxpayer's share of production from the Nation's substantial oil and gas mineral assets. The other method is good old-fashioned cash.

I have been arguing for years that the Royalty-in-Kind program is a bad idea. Under the pretense of "enhanced transparency" and "reduced litigation," the oil industry, with a little help from its Republican friends in Congress and the Administration, snookered folks into believing that taxpayers would get a better deal if Federal oil and gas royalty payments were made "in-kind" instead of paying in cash. Despite report after report, investigations and potentially even criminal indictments, the Minerals Management Service, MMS, has forged ahead with this misbegotten program. Today, the RIK Program is selling over 800 million cubic feet of natural gas per day and over 150,000 barrels of crude oil per day on the open market.

The MMS reports that revenues from sales of RIK oil and gas in fiscal year 2006 were approximately \$4.1 billion. However, we have no way of knowing if it got the best price or even broke even. Even the MMS itself estimates that the Royalty-in-Kind program only increased royalty revenues by a meager 0.3 percent—which according to the Government Accountability Office, GAO, during a recent Natural Resources Committee hearing, could not be confirmed.

As further evidence of the problems with RIK, earlier this year, the Inspector General for the Department of Energy found chronic mismanagement in the transfer of oil between the Department of the Interior and the Department of Energy. During a brief 4-month period of oil transfers between the two agencies, approximately 32,000 barrels of oil were lost or could not be accounted for—that is almost \$4 million worth of oil that is simply gone. The GAO also concluded that the current method for filling the Reserve is not cost-effective.

The bottom line—the Royalty-in-Kind program should not be used to fill the Strategic Petroleum Reserve. Not now, not ever.

Mr. Speaker, this bill is an important first step in reducing the pain Americans are feeling at the pump. It cuts off the flow of Royalty-in-Kind oil to the Strategic Petroleum Reserve at a time when that flow is neither necessary nor prudent. I believe we need to pass this bill and then take a closer look at the Royalty-in-Kind program overall to see if that, too, is costing the American taxpayer more than it is worth.

Mr. GENE GREEN of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I stand in strong support of H.R. 6022, Strategic Petroleum Reserve Fill Suspension and Consumer Protection Act, introduced by my good friend from Texas, Representative NICK LAMPSON, and Representative PETER WELCH.

Today's rising petroleum and gasoline prices are set by a complex mix of factors, including global crude prices, increased world and U.S. demand, refinery capacity and maintenance schedules, gasoline imports, prescriptive fuel mandates, and geopolitical events. Most of these factors are out of our effective control. For those that aren't, like the proper management of fuel supplies in the Strategic Petroleum Reserve, SPR, I believe Congress should do all we can to help reduce the cost of energy to American consumers.

H.R. 6022 requires the Interior and Energy Departments to discontinue the acquisition of oil and shipments to the SPR until the end of this year, and permits fill to resume if the average price of oil does not exceed \$75 a barrel. The bill also allows petroleum shipments ordered under existing Interior Department contracts to be shipped to the reserve.

This legislation is strongly needed because the current administration has also not been properly managing the SPR for American consumers. The SPR exists to protect us during an energy crisis, and is almost full to its 727 million barrels of oil capacity. But while the cost per barrel of oil continues to skyrocket, the administration continues to purchase high-priced oil off the market to put into the SPR, limiting the amount of oil available.

When oil prices are very high, we should release SPR oil into the market to increase supply, as the Department of Energy did in response to Hurricane Katrina. While not expected to significantly reduce prices, some studies suggest suspending the purchase of oil for the reserve could reduce gas prices anywhere between 5 to 24 cents a gallon. Every cent helps.

While there is no quick fix for gasoline prices, I hope Congress will also address America's need to produce additional domestic energy, both conventional and renewable, to ensure the reliability and affordability of our Nation's critical energy supplies.

Mr. UDALL of Colorado. Mr. Speaker, I am a cosponsor of this legislation and I urge its approval.

The bill would direct the President to temporarily suspend putting oil into the Strategic Petroleum Reserve through the end of the year, unless before that time the price of oil should drop below \$75 per barrel.

This is the quickest step we can take to increase the supply of oil on the open market, and so to bring some relief to consumers suffering from the high price of gasoline and other petroleum products.

Currently, the Federal Government is putting some 70,000 barrels of oil into the strategic reserve each day, even though the reserve is 97 percent full. While there are no guarantees, economists estimate that suspending that action could reduce gas prices by 5 to 24 cents a gallon.

It should not have been necessary for Congress to be considering this legislation. Current law gives the president authority to suspend diversion of oil into the strategic reserve.

That authority has been used in the past, by the first President Bush, by President Clinton, and by the current President Bush, who did so

in 2006. And history shows using that authority can help consumers—in 2000, after such action, the price of oil dropped by one-third, from \$30 to \$20 per barrel.

That's why last November, with other Members of Congress from both sides of the aisle, I sent a letter asking President Bush to again suspend putting oil into the strategic reserve.

Regrettably, the president did not agree to that request, or to a second similar request that many of us made last month. So now Congress must act to require what the president has declined to do on his own.

That is what this bill does and why I support its passage. But I think we should not stop there. There are at least five other steps to reduce the extent to which American consumers are paying the price for our flawed energy policies.

Specifically, we should—

(1) Crack Down on price gouging—Speculators have contributed to oil prices increasing 82 percent in the last year. While these have been regulated markets in the past, more and more new investment tools are outside of regulation by the Commodity Futures Trading Commission (CFTC) or any other Federal Government oversight. That's why I am backing a bill (H.R. 594) to give the CFTC oversight over additional energy commodities trading and to establish civil and criminal penalties for price gouging.

(2) Consider Suspension of the tariff on ethanol imports—Suspending the 54-cent-per-gallon ethanol import tariff would mean more ethanol coming into the country, which would increase fuel supplies and lessen the pressure on prices.

(3) Stop subsidizing the oil and gas industry—The Republican Congress passed an energy bill in 2005 that included about \$2.6 billion in tax cuts for the oil and gas industry—an industry that has seen record profits in the last few years. I strongly support removing some of the unneeded tax credits for this industry, specifically the tax credit for taxes paid to foreign governments and the deduction for domestic manufacturing activities for major oil and gas producers.

(4) Increase oil and gas drilling in certain areas—I support expanding exploration and development in appropriate areas both onshore and offshore, as long as it is done in a sustainable and environmentally sound manner. I also have proposed legislation (H.R. 3182), with the support of Representative JEFF FLAKE and other Members from both sides of the aisle, to relax the current embargo that prevents U.S. oil companies from competing to develop oil offshore from Cuba, where companies from other countries are currently drilling.

(5) Push renewable energy alternatives—promote cellulosic ethanol and the Production Tax Credit—Increasing America's use of renewable energy sources will also help address supply in future years by providing a more diverse energy portfolio. Cellulosic ethanol has great potential to not only lower our gas prices, but also our food prices as we move away from corn-based ethanol.

Mr. COURTNEY. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of the Strategic Petroleum Fill Suspension and Consumer Protection Act and I am pleased to be a cosponsor of H.R. 6022.

As I travel around eastern Connecticut, I am confronted with families, business owners, truckers, farmers and fishermen who are

struggling to maintain their lives and livelihoods.

Rising oil and gasoline prices are choking our economy. Food and consumer goods are rising as fuel prices rise, bringing additional pain to many people across our country.

In my hometown of Vernon, CT, the price of a gallon of gasoline hit \$3.99. I am now hearing that some older gasoline pumps throughout the country are not even programmed to go above \$3.99.

The bill before us today is simple, straightforward and effective. Instead of continuing to add 70,000 barrels of oil per day to fill an already stocked Strategic Petroleum Reserve, SPR, H.R. 6022 would instead, put that oil on the market to ease supply and price. And we should absolutely not increase the fill rate to 76,000 barrels per day like what the Administration has planned for later this summer.

Petroleum economists expect that gasoline prices could decline by as much as 24 cents if we stopped filling the SPR now. The SPR is 97 percent full with over 700 million barrels of oil; in March 2003, when we went to war in Iraq, the SPR stood at 599 million barrels.

Diverting oil from the SPR is something that the President has done in the past. When he directed the Secretary to stop filling the SPR during the summer of 2006, he did so by saying, "every little bit helps." At that time he further stipulated that the SPR was at a level that could weather any supply disruption during that summer. In 2006, the SPR stood at approximately 688 million barrels, less than what is there today.

I have written to President Bush several times asking him to divert oil from the SPR, but as yet, he has refused to heed my and my colleague's requests.

Our constituents need relief from rising oil prices and diverting oil from the SPR will achieve that goal. I urge my colleagues to support H.R. 6022.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of H.R. 6200, To suspend the acquisition of petroleum for the Strategic Petroleum Reserve, and for other purposes, introduced by my distinguished colleague from Vermont, Representative WELCH. This legislation suspends the filling of the Strategic Petroleum Reserve for the rest of the year, as long as the price of crude oil remains above \$75 per barrel, and is an important first step in addressing America's current energy crisis.

Mr. Speaker, we are all painfully aware of the devastation high energy prices have had on American families. This New Direction Congress, of which I am proud to be a part, is fighting to reduce our dependence on foreign oil and bring down record gas prices, and launch a cleaner, smarter energy future for America that lowers costs and creates hundreds of thousands of green jobs. In addition to being a representative from Houston, Texas, the energy capital of the world, for the past 12 years, I have been the Chair of the Energy Braintrust of the Congressional Black Caucus. As such, I recognize that energy is the lifeblood of every economy, especially ours. Producing more of it leads to more good jobs, cheaper goods, lower fuel prices, and greater economic and national security.

Today, as the national average of gas has reached a record high of \$3.72 a gallon, this legislation is an imperative step in addressing a burgeoning crisis. Each day, it takes 70,000

barrels of oil off the market to fill the Strategic Petroleum Reserve, which at 97 percent full is at it highest level ever. While the President last week stated that he did not believe suspending filling the reserve would affect prices, in 2006 when he was about to apply the same strategy we seek today, he stated, "One way to ease price is to increase supply . . . I've directed the Department of Energy to defer filling the reserve this summer. . . . So by deferring deposits until the fall, we'll leave a little more oil on the market." Despite calls from both sides of the aisle and both bodies of this Congress, President Bush has failed to listen to the will of the American people. As such, today the Senate passed a similar provision by a vote of 97–1, and this House intends to do the same.

Not only will suspending the fill of the SPR work this time, it has in the past when it was utilized by President George W. Bush, President Clinton, and President George H.W. Bush. By temporarily diverting the 70,000 barrels of oil that go into the SPR a day, this legislation could reduce gas prices from 5 to 24 cents a gallon, helping American families, businesses, and the economy as a whole.

In 2006, when President George W. Bush deferred deliveries from the SPR, he stated, "Our Strategic Reserve is sufficiently large enough to guard against any major supply disruption over the next few months." Today, we have 702 million barrels of oil in the SPR, which is 14 million more barrels of oil than the 688 million in the SPR when President Bush suspended deliveries two years ago. I also believe we should put a moratorium on gas taxes through payment by energy company profits.

The President has the legal authority to suspend the fill of the SPR and help already suffering American families during this period of economic downturn. Because the President has ignored our requests to address this crisis, it is our duty to support this legislation and help the families, businesses, and economy of the United States. As such, I strongly support this legislation and urge my colleagues to join me and do the same.

Mr. ETHERIDGE. Mr. Speaker, this week gas prices have hit yet another new high. Today, gas prices are higher than they have ever been in the history of our country, and rural Americans are getting hit particularly hard.

Yet while most Americans are struggling to make ends meet, oil companies are making record profits. H.R. 6022, the Strategic Petroleum Reserve Fill Suspension and Consumer Protection Act, will suspend the acquisition of petroleum for the Strategic Petroleum Reserve to provide relief to the American consumer.

Mr. Speaker, everyone from farmers, commuters, employers, and senior citizens have been hit hard by the rise in gas prices. This is affecting the rural economy of the people of the Second District of North Carolina, and indeed rural areas across the country where people must travel long distances to make sure they have the basic necessities of life, from school and jobs, to church and the grocery store.

This legislation will suspend the purchase of as much as 70,000 barrels of oil per day, and could have the effect of lowering our gas prices. While I believe that it is our duty to find alternatives to our reliance on foreign oil, right now we need to take this step to suspend deposits into the Strategic Petroleum Reserve.

I urge my colleagues to vote for passage of H.R. 6022.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. DINGELL) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 6022.

The question was taken.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds being in the affirmative, the ayes have it.

Mr. WELCH of Vermont. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX and the Chair's prior announcement, further proceedings on this motion will be postponed.

MENTAL HEALTH MONTH

Mrs. NAPOLITANO. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the resolution (H. Res. 1134) supporting the goals and ideals of Mental Health Month.

The Clerk read the title of the resolution.

The text of the resolution is as follows:

H. RES. 1134

Whereas the mental health and well-being of Americans is a critical issue that affects not only the quality of life, but also the health of our communities and our economic stability;

Whereas the stigma associated with mental health persists;

Whereas more than 57,000,000 Americans suffer from a mental illness;

Whereas approximately 1 in 5 children has a diagnosable mental disorder;

Whereas more than 1 in 5 of our troops suffer from major depression or post traumatic stress disorder;

Whereas more than half of all prison and jail inmates suffer from mental illness;

Whereas mental illness is the most common disability in our Nation;

Whereas untreated mental illness costs businesses and the American economy over \$150,000,000,000 annually;

Whereas untreated mental illness is a leading cause of absenteeism and lost productivity in the workplace;

Whereas in 2004, over 32,000 individuals committed suicide in the United States, at twice the rate of homicides;

Whereas suicide is the third leading cause of death among people between the ages of 10 and 24;

Whereas in 2004, individuals aged 65 and older made up only 12.4 percent of the population, but accounted for 16 percent of all suicides, and the rate of suicide among older Americans is higher than for any other age group;

Whereas 1 in 4 Latina adolescents report seriously contemplating suicide, a rate higher than any other demographic;

Whereas studies report that persons with serious mental illness die, on average, 25 years earlier than the general population; and

Whereas it would be appropriate to designate May 2008 as Mental Health Month: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the House of Representatives—

(1) supports the goals and ideals of Mental Health Month in order to emphasize scientific facts and findings regarding mental

health and to remove the stigma associated therewith;

(2) recognizes that mental well-being is equally as important as physical well-being for our citizens, our communities, our businesses, our economy, and our Nation;

(3) applauds the coalescing of national and community organizations in working to promote public awareness of mental health, and providing critical information and support to the people and families affected by mental illness;

(4) supports the findings of the President's Commission on Mental Health that the Nation's failure to prioritize mental health is a national tragedy; and

(5) encourages all organizations and health practitioners to use Mental Health Month as an opportunity to promote mental well-being and awareness, ensure access to appropriate services, and support overall quality of life for those with mental illness.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentlewoman from California (Mrs. NAPOLITANO) and the gentleman from Texas (Mr. BARTON) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from California.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mrs. NAPOLITANO. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on this resolution under consideration.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentlewoman from California?

There was no objection.

Mrs. NAPOLITANO. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, for far too long the topic of mental health has been pushed aside and swept under the rug. You don't see it, you don't talk about it, and you don't hear about it. It confuses people are crazy.

However, we cannot continue to ignore that mental illness does not discriminate. It touches all regardless of race, of gender, of class or of religion. It is time we address this issue at the forefront honestly and openly. Too many of our family members of our friends, our coworkers and especially our veterans and soldiers have had to suffer with mental illnesses in silence.

According to the U.S. Surgeon General, 57 million Americans suffer from some form of mental illness. Despite findings that most mental illnesses are highly treatable, only one in three individuals suffering from these illnesses seek and or receive any treatment.

This low treatment can be attributed to the strong stigma associated with mental health issue that is still pervasive and persist. Twenty percent of our United States population suffers from a diagnosable, treatable mental disorder, making the mental illness the leading cause of disability in our Nation, affecting our businesses and our economy.

The mental health and well-being of Americans are critical issues that affect not only the health of our communities, the quality of life, and, as im-

portantly, our economic stability. A new report by the National Institute of Mental Health found that serious mental illnesses cost Americans at least \$193 billion a year in lost earnings alone.

Our action is far overdue. We have had tests, screening for breast cancer, for heart attacks, for strokes and a myriad of other diseases and conditions. We have not yet woken up to the fact that the brain functions are vital to our body's health and survival.

It is critical that we will destigmatize mental illness so that our children, our families, our veterans receive the necessary help they need to lead productive lives with support from their families and their communities.

I respectfully encourage all of my colleagues to support this resolution to recognize May as Mental Health Month. We must all come together on this critical issue. It is vital that we recognize the scientific facts and real findings regarding mental health and work to remove the stigma associated therewith.

By increasing awareness of mental health issues we can insure that individuals have access to services including early detection and early prevention, and, most of all, to assure parity in our medical delivery systems.

This will allow us to improve the lives of those suffering from mental illness and their loved ones while reversing the negative impact that mental illness has had on our economy, on our families, and on our Nation.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. BARTON of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of House Resolution 1134, acknowledging the month of May as National Mental Health Month. Mental Health Month has been recognized by Congress for over 50 years and has continued to raise awareness in our communities and to lower the stigma associated with mental disorders.

I would like to express my gratitude to the national and community organizations working to promote public awareness of mental health, providing the proper information for families affected by mental illness. Your work is critical to increasing the quality of life for those with mental illnesses.

I would also like to thank the author of the resolution, Congresswoman Grace Napolitano of California, for her leadership in helping Americans' well-being and addressing mental disorders.

I would encourage all of my colleagues to vote in favor of this resolution.

With that, I would ask if Congressman Mike Castle of the great State of Delaware could be the minority floor manager for the balance of this bill.

I reserve the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Texas?