us in this effort and do something big for the American people because the problem is big. It is not a little problem. It is a very big problem.

I believe the next 3 or 4 days will shed some light for the American people on the issue of whether they, the American people, own the substantial quantities of oil and gas that are off our shores that in the next few years can be the subject matter of new modern techniques for drilling and gathering the oil and gas for use by the American people, thus reducing the heavy pressure put upon the world's supply of oil and natural gas.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. STABENOW). The assistant majority leader.

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, this is an interesting debate because it is really coming down to some different points of view. As both sides present their cases, I am sure the American people will listen carefully because there is hardly an issue we can discuss that hits each and every family and each and every person so personally. This is the sign that you see in front of the gas station every morning when you drive to work, every weekend when you start to fill up. This is what you face when you go to fill up that car or truck and reach into your wallet for your credit card or cash and realize this is the most you have ever paid for gasoline in your life.

This is real. This isn't some theoretical possibility that it may affect your life. This debate is about reality. So it is important that the people who are following this debate understand there are two very different points of view.

The view expressed by the Senator from New Mexico is one that I think most Republicans now espouse. It is this: if we could just drill more oil, we would have a larger supply, and it would bring down the cost. If the cost goes down, then the price of gasoline goes down and, thank goodness, we will get some relief at the gasoline pump.

It is a good theory, and it is their starting point, but it has some weaknesses. The first weakness is, if you take a look at all of the oil the United States has within its boundaries and offshore, all of this, the estimate of all the oil we could reach at any given time in the United States represents 3 percent of the world's supply of oil. Most of our oil comes from other places—Canada, Nigeria, Saudi Arabia. Our oil, U.S. oil, is 3 percent of the world's total. How much oil do we consume in the United States? We consume 25 percent of the world's production. We cannot drill our way out if we drill every drop of oil available to us anywhere, onshore and offshore. We could not meet the clear demand of the largest economy in the world.

Simply, drilling does not answer the challenge. It ignores the reality that China, India, and many other countries which, for the longest time, didn't use as much oil as the United States, now are starting to use more—more cars, more trucks, more industry. Their demand for that same world oil supply is putting a strain on the market. There is no question about it.

The second question, obviously, is, is there a place, someplace in the United States—either onshore or offshore—where there is the answer to our prayers immediately, where we could say: For goodness sake, clear the decks, stop the regulators, get the derricks out, and let's drill. Bring out that oil and, for goodness sake, bring down the price of gasoline. Is there such a place?

The answer is no, honestly, because those who are involved in the industry tell us anytime we decide to drill on another acre of land, it is a decision which will lead to production of oil anywhere from 8 to 14 years from now—8 to 14 years. Why? They have to go in and map the land. They have to figure out where the oil might be. They have to do some testing. They have to find some equipment.

Incidentally, all the oil equipment for offshore drilling right now is in use. There is nothing like an inventory waiting to be dragged out and put in just the right spot. It is not there. It takes years to get in the queue, to bring these oil exploration operations on line. Once they are on line, production starts slowly and builds. And that is the reality that explains the 8 to 14 years.

So we do not have any oil in the United States to take care of ourselves indefinitely, and we don't have this mother lode of oil somewhere that if we could just tap it tomorrow, it is going to answer our prayers.

Then there is the third issue. The third issue is the Federal Government, which controls a lot of land within the United States and off our shores, continually offers to the oil and gas companies the opportunity to lease that land and explore it for gas and oil. If you listen to the other side, you would think we are squandering—holding back all of these oil and gas assets from oil and gas companies and daring and defying them to go forward with exploration and production. That is not the case.

President Bush and the Republicans and the oil companies want to greatly expand the available areas for drilling. But is it responsible? The Federal Government already offers tracts of land in offshore regions for oil and natural gas development. In fact, nearly 94 million acres of U.S. territory—that is a larger landmass than the size of the State of Utah—is currently under lease to the oil and gas companies who believe there is oil and gas to be found. That is twice the size of the State of Pennsylvania currently under lease.

It is not as if access has been restricted. The Government leases millions of new acres every year. An additional 4.6 million acres of Federal land was leased in 2007. The Bureau of Land Management has held 21 onshore lease sales already this year. Last week a sale was held for nearly 63,000 acres. BLM has 18 more lease sales scheduled through this year. Offshore lease sales have proceeded at an even faster pace.

Since the beginning of 2007, the Minerals Management Service has held six lease sales for open areas off the Outer Continental Shelf in the Gulf of Mexico and in Alaska's Chukchi Sea.

How much offshore oil land has been offered? It is 115 million acres that has been offered to the oil and gas companies for a lease on which to drill. How big a territory is 115 million acres?

Most people, certainly in my State and around the country, know Interstate 80.

It starts over here in New Jersey and ends in California. If you were to take a 628-mile swath along Interstate 80 from New Jersey to California, that would represent 115 million acres. That is what we have offered to the oil and gas companies to lease; land they can look at and explore and find oil and gas and produce it.

The oil companies, that said they do not have enough land to look at for future oil and gas, have responded by saying they would like to have 12 million acres, that is the amount of seabed the oil companies put bids on, barely 10 percent of what we offered them.

In my I–80 comparison, that would take you from New Jersey to Pennsylvania, about 310 miles. Look at the big stretch they are not interested in bidding on. We hear from the Republicans: There is no place for them to turn. But when we offered them the land, they turned it down. They are not using the leased land they currently have either. This next chart shows there are 68 million acres of Federal land currently leased to the oil and gas companies. What you see is kind of a shot of the Western part of the United States. The leased land that is under production is the dark areas, the black areas.

The red areas represent leased land by the Federal Government to the oil companies that they pay for—they do not force them to take it, they pay for it, they pay an annual lease for the right for oil and gas production. The red areas represent areas they lease and are currently not exploring or producing on.

So you see the argument that there is not enough land out there for them to look at defies explanation. When we open it for bid, they will not bid on it. When they do lease it, they do not explore it and use it. Does that sound like there is a lack of supply here of land that they can turn to? That is the Republican argument.

They do argue that there is one little spot, one spot in the United States of America where they can find oil, the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, 1.56 million acres. Now how much is there? I do not know. But I will tell you that next door to the ANWR is the National Petroleum Reserve of Alaska, which has been established specifically for oil and gas development.