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MAY 15, 2008

VOLUME 6, ISSUE 7

LETTER FROM THE CONGRESSMAN

Dear Friends,

In the past weeks I have had the opportunity to address key issues that our nation is currently facing. We have been discussing possible solutions to alleviate the soaring gas prices as we head into the summer travel season, the passage of the 2007 Farm Bill, the introduction of an alternative emergency spending bill, and the GOP's new American Families Agenda, which is designed to address key issues facing 21st century families.

As always, I thank all of you in the 31st District for the opportunity to serve you in Congress. I look forward to advancing the conservative principles that make Central Texas so great.

Until next week,



RISING GAS PRICES: JUST THE FACTS

It's official. Gas prices have hit \$4 per gallon. Heading into last weekend, Chicago's CBS 2 News reported, "Premium gas at some Chicago pumps has reached an unfortunate milestone-\$4 a gallon- and its not even Memorial Day yet."

While prices have yet to hit \$4 in Texas, they are certainly heading that way, much to the dismay of Texas families and businesses. The Associated Press reported this week that gas prices spiked once again, according to analysis from AAA, "Gas and diesel pump prices jumped to yet another record Friday, piling on the costs for motorists as well as consumers reliant on trucks, trains and ships that deliver goods to market."

In 2006, then House-Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi promised Americans that "Democrats have a common sense plan to help bring down skyrocketing gas prices." The truth is-over a year later-the price of gasoline in Central Texas has risen from \$2.74 to \$3.31 and diesel has jumped from \$2.88 to \$4.04, according to AAA. With the travel season just a month away, this news could not come at a worse time for Texans planning their summer vacations.

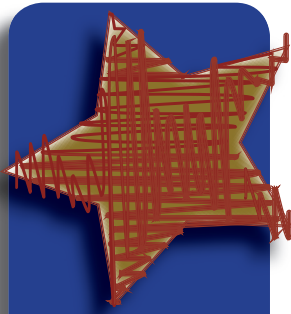
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Now, in what seems to be a desperate attempt to discredit progress being made in Iraq, many Democrats are linking the slowing economy and record gas prices to the success our troops are having in Iraq. According to leading columnists and economists, this presumption is false. Below are quotes from recent articles, many written by liberals, discrediting this assumption.

- Princeton University Economist and New York Times Columnist Paul Krugman: “An Iraq recession? One thing I get asked fairly often is whether the Iraq war is responsible for our economic difficulties. The answer (with slight qualifications) is no...” (“Conscience of a Liberal,” 1/29/08)
- Martin N. Baily, a former chairman of President Bill Clinton’s Council of Economic Advisers: “...[T]he current problems the United States is facing [with the economy] have very little to do with the war in Iraq.” (The Washington Post, 4/15/08)
- Max Boot, Senior Fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations: “In short, it is absurd to suggest that a lack of Iraqi production is responsible for the rise in oil prices; the likely culprits are increased demand in China, India, and other emerging markets.” (Commentary Magazine, 3/21/08)
- Trilby Lundberg, editor of the nationwide Lundberg survey on the “essential causes” of high gas prices: “The essential causes are strong crude oil prices, dramatically higher ethanol prices and seasonally rising gasoline demand.” (Reuters, 4/6/08)

The truth is that the rising cost of gas can be linked to simple supply and demand. Demand continues to go up, but our supply is starting to decrease. According to the U.S. Energy Department, inventories of gasoline fell 5.5 million barrels last week, a much bigger decline than forecast by analysts surveyed by Dow Jones Newswires. Crude inventories fell 2.3 million barrels last week, the department’s Energy Information Administration also reported, compared to the gain analysts expected. We can’t expect to see gas prices go down if we don’t increase our supply.

Congress needs to stop blaming our soldiers, blaming the President and blaming each other for skyrocketing gas prices. Legislation that simply raises taxes on American oil companies isn’t going to alleviate the problem either. In fact, it will only make the burden heavier for consumers. We need to get down to the facts and start passing legislation that will encourage conservation and promote the research and innovation necessary to develop new technologies. But, while doing this, we must also unlock new oil supply. We live in a world where people still put gasoline in their cars, so we can’t expect new technology to take the place of oil and gas over night. Good reforms to energy problems are the only way Americans are going to see lower energy prices, and it is time Congress starts doing something about it.

STATEMENT ON THE PASSAGE OF 2007 FARM BILL

This week, the House of Representatives passed H.R. 2419, The Farm, Nutrition and Bioenergy Act of 2007, known also as the 2007 Farm Bill.

America’s agriculture community is responsible for providing the food and fiber for our country. Our farmers and ranchers have been waiting far too long for legislation that reforms farm policy, and protects the safety net for all of America’s food and fiber producers. We must continue to put forth policies that protect American producers and consumers while keeping America’s food and fiber dependency here at home.

While this bill is not perfect, it is the result of months of bipartisan compromise and is a strong step in the direction of farm policy reform-reform that must not be delayed any further. Congress must also come together to pass the Colombia Free Trade Agreement, an agreement critical to the state of our fragile economy. Over a quarter of our revenues in agriculture come from export markets making trade an important component of Texas agriculture. American exports face heavy tariffs, which can run as high as 35 percent for our manufactured goods and even higher for our agricultural products, putting our Texas farmers, ranchers, workers and small businesses at a severe disadvantage. We must pass this agreement in order to alleviate these costs for our producers.

Central Texas is recognized nationally for its agriculture industry, and as the Congressman that has the privilege of representing such a prosperous area, I will continue fighting for legislation that benefits both our Texas producers and consumers.



AMERICAN FAMILIES AGENDA ADDRESSES THE REAL CONCERNS OF AMERICAN FAMILIES

This week, House Conference Vice Chairwoman Kay Granger (R-TX) unveiled her American families agenda. The agenda includes two pieces of legislation that I sponsored, the Military Spouses Employment Act and the Military Spouses Residency Relief Act.

American families are the foundation of our great country. Now, more than ever, they are worried about sky-rocketing food and gas prices, the rising cost of education and health care and the safety of their children. Families want reassurance that Congress is listening to what they are saying and producing bills that will alleviate their worries. I applaud my fellow Texan, Kay Granger, for putting an agenda together that addresses the concerns of American families.

As a husband and father myself, I understand the frustrations families in Texas are facing. I am facing them myself, and want you to know that Republicans are armed with numerous bills, most of which Speaker Pelosi have denied the opportunity to pass. I am hopeful that my Democratic colleagues will take a good look at these bills, listen to the cries of American families, and work with Republicans to produce solutions that will ease the burden American families are facing. Iraq and Afghanistan.

ALTERNATIVE EMERGENCY SPENDING BILL

I was proud to co-sponsor a separate war funding bill (H.R. 6026), introduced by Ranking Member Jerry Lewis (R-CA), as an alternative to the Democrats' secret spending proposal.

The emergency spending alternative introduced by Lewis has specific purposes: to fund emergency priorities for our troops in harm's way, the Department of Defense (DOD) and foreign operations overseas. The Democrats' legislation, which has yet to be seen by Members of Congress or the public, is reported to include anti-war provisions that would allow Congress to micro-manage our soldiers from Washington, D.C. as well as billions in unrelated spending.

May is Military Appreciation month, a time when we should go above and beyond to honor our military. Instead, the Democrat Leadership has offered the funds and resources our troops need to succeed, but only if Congress agrees to spend billions in unrelated spending and let Nancy Pelosi play General from Washington, D.C.

Additionally, the Democrats' bill will go straight to the floor without consideration by any House committee or input from Democrats or Republicans outside of Speaker Pelosi's office. It is Congress' responsibility to craft spending bills and ensure tax dollars are spent effectively. Overseeing a war effort and dictating strategy to commanders in the field is far beyond the scope of our constitutional obligation.

We need to get these funds approved and we need to do it quickly. Our troops have waited 450 days for these critical funds, and the only way to get funds to them is to work together in a bipartisan way, limit the irrelevant spending, and permit open and equal participation in the legislative process. Our troops deserve everything we can give them and we must stop playing politics with their resources and help them succeed and return home safely."

The alternative bill matches the President's request and includes \$178 billion in total spending for the Department of Defense, State and Foreign operations and military construction. In comparison, the Democrat proposal contains approximately \$250 billion in total spending and includes funds for numerous extraneous programs.
