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NEWS RELEASE

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Deal with the Here and Now **by Senator Larry Craig**

If my Democrat colleagues in the Senate were doctors, they'd apparently treat heart attacks by first giving the patient a new diet and exercise routine. Sure, those will help the patient in the long run, but what about right now?

Essentially, the Democrats have taken a similar approach with regard to energy issues facing our country. Some proposals in the bill we're currently debating, such as more anti-price gouging laws, will do nothing to lower gas prices or carbon dioxide emissions. Since the 1970s, more than 30 state and federal investigations into price gouging by the oil industry have never found any evidence of such a practice, but it sure makes for good soundbites!

Sure, there are some worthwhile ideas, like improving efficiency in cars and encouraging development of alternative energy sources, like wind, solar, biofuels and others. We should all do what we can to use energy more efficiently, and developing new sources will help diversify America's energy portfolio and make us less dependent on foreign sources of oil. Having said that, neither of these approaches alone will reduce the price of gas or emissions any time soon because they will take years, if not decades, to have an impact.

The reason for high gas prices today is as simple as supply and demand. Our economy, as well as those of China, India and many other nations have grown rapidly over the last several years. As an economy grows, so does its demand for energy. But energy supplies have remained largely stagnant during that time. If demand rises while the supply remains the same, prices rise. The surest way to bring them down is to increase supply and simultaneously reduce usage.

The United States has significant reserves of oil and natural gas, but we aren't allowed to use them because nobody wants drilling in their own back yard. I have teamed with a Senior Democrat, Senator Dorgan of North Dakota, to ease drilling restrictions in the Gulf of Mexico, because we believe technology has improved to the point where drilling can now be done with very little risk to the environment.

Because of overly constrictive regulations, we haven't been able to build new refineries to process the oil either, which is the main bottleneck in the supply system. America imports 60 percent of our oil and 20 percent of the refined gasoline we consume, because no new refineries have been built here since 1976. A Republican amendment to the Democrat energy proposal – which would have

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streamlined the permitting process to build refineries – received a vote on the Senate floor, but short-sighted Democrats said “No,” and won.

Another flaw in the Democrat energy bill is the way they seek to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. They claim to support development of renewable sources of energy like wind, solar, ethanol and biodiesel, but don't count hydropower as renewable, and they refuse to acknowledge how clean nuclear power actually is. They also punish states that have no possibility of developing their renewables, like wind. Let's face it – some places just aren't windy enough. Idaho is, Florida isn't.

I sponsored language in the bill that would give states like Idaho flexibility to develop or take advantage of the clean energy they have. Because of our abundance of non-emitting hydropower, Idaho emits the fewest greenhouse gases of any state. Our hydropower also gives us the lowest power rates in the country, and helps our economy grow faster than any other state.

Still, until these alternatives become more widely and cheaply available, we must deal with the here and now – oil and natural gas. We can and must prepare for the future, but we can't get there until we deal with the present.