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LETTER FROM THE CONGRESSMAN

Dear Friends,

Over the past two weeks Congress has voted on numerous pieces of legislation, but has yet to address the number one issue facing our nation-energy. Republicans introduced the American Energy Act, aimed at reducing gas prices by increasing the supply of American-made energy, improving conservation and efficiency, and promoting renewable and alternative energy technologies. This bill is the right thing to do, and it is what the American people deserve, yet Speaker Pelosi refuses to allow Congress to vote on it.

As always, I thank all of you in the 31st District for the opportunity to serve you in Congress and will keep you updated on the latest information regarding important issues. God Bless Texas!

Until next week,



CHEESEBURGERS AND FUEL STANDARDS

The current system of gasoline standards in the U.S. is complex. Because of numerous state and federal standards, suppliers of gasoline face many different criteria for fuel quality, resulting in many different types of fuels. These bureaucratic requirements lead to situations where adjacent or nearby areas may have significantly different standards. These different fuel formulations are referred to as "boutique fuels."

To put this plainly, let's compare these specially ordered fuels to ordering a cheeseburger. Some people like their cheeseburger fully loaded, while others prefer to hold the mayo, and some like their burger dry-meat and cheese only. The point is that each person likes their cheeseburger individualized and made especially for them. To individualize each cheeseburger takes more time than if everyone ordered them the same. Boutique fuels work in much the same way, and while personalizing a cheeseburger for lunch or dinner is definitely worth the wait, creating individual fuels for individual states is a costly and much less efficient way to produce fuel.

Many of you watched this week as President Bush lifted the executive ban on producing oil from the Outer Continental Shelf. This means that the only thing standing between the American people and vast oil reserves is action from Congress.

While I whole-heartedly support Congress' removing this ban to

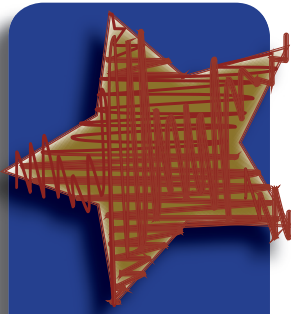
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increase our domestic energy supply, I also believe there are a number of additional ways we can bring prices down, including, opening up ANWR for environmental energy exploration, increasing our conservation methods and habits, exploring new types of energy production, such as wind, solar, nuclear and regulating “boutique” fuels.

When supplies for certain types of fuel are limited, prices tend to rise quickly, substantially, and sometimes, with very little prior notice. The more boutique fuels required, the more expensive the price at the pump is for everyday Americans.

Republicans have legislation that would lower the existing number of boutique fuels by requiring the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to remove specific blends from the boutique fuel list if the blend becomes obsolete or identical to an existing fuel. The Fuel Mandate Reduction Act, introduced by Rep. Roy Blunt, also gives the EPA authority to waive fuel regulations should a serious supply disruption arise-similar to the presidential waiver following Hurricane Katrina in 2005.

Bottom line-getting gas prices under control will require an “all of the above” approach to building a national energy strategy. That means improving our conservation habits, building new refineries and producing new sources of American energy, and simplifying the types of fuels available for purchase.

Nancy Pelosi hasn’t been much help when it comes to scheduling votes on serious bills that would bring down prices at the pump, but it is my hope that she will listen to the cries of American families feeling the pain at the pump all over the country. We need this bill to come to the floor so the House can pass it and we can begin taking meaningful steps to bringing down the price of gas for all Americans.

PRESIDENT LIFTS BAN ON OUTER CONTINENTAL SHELF DRILLING

Recently, President Bush announced that he will lift the presidential ban on the exploration of American energy in the Outer Continental Shelf miles off U.S. shores. Lifting the 18-year old ban leaves Congress as the final roadblock to bringing American oil and natural gas into the country for production.

Lifting this ban clears the path for new and clean deepwater oil and gas exploration. The only obstacle left before this energy can get to the American people is Speaker Pelosi and the Democrat Congress. Texans are scaling back due to the ever-rising cost of gas prices, and now every possible hurdle has been cleared for Congress to take action and get this energy to the American people.

Republicans have taken an all of the above approach to energy solutions over the past several months, including exploring America’s Outer Continental Shelf. Doing so would decrease America’s dependency on foreign oil and lower prices at the pump. Americans are counting on Congress to work together and lift this ban. Republicans stand ready to work with Democrats to do just that.


NEW WEBSITE OFFERS MORE CONSTITUENT SERVICES

Staying connected to my constituents while traveling between Washington D.C. and Texas is not an easy task, which is why I have launched a new website with additional information. This new website makes it easier for constituents of the 31st District to see how I voted on legislation and where I stand on certain issues. Additionally, the website has useful information for students and the media and constituents can sign up for my bi-monthly newsletter quickly and efficiently.

The new website will feature videos, radio broadcasts, the Carter blog, a new interactive district map and more tools for constituents. Constituents can visit the website at <http://carter.house.gov>.

Whether you are planning a visit to Washington, need help with a federal agency, or you’re looking for the latest news on financial aid for school, my new website is full of the information you are looking for. It is important for my constituents to know that the answers to many of their questions are just a click away.

HEALTH CARE COSTS ARE HURTING TEXANS



Next to sky-rocketing gas prices and our illegal immigration crisis, the rising cost of health care is one of the top concerns for Central Texans. There are thousands of Texans who want health insurance but cannot afford it, and thousands of low-income children who are uninsured. Health care costs continue to rise far faster than inflation, causing wages to stagnate and squeezing the budgets of families who already suffer from high gas prices.

Instead of solutions, the Majority in Congress has offered more of what got our health care system to this state in the first place; more lawsuits, more bureaucracy and less choices for patients and their families. This has to change.

Republicans have rolled out an agenda to reform our health care system. I have always believed that government tends to create more problems than it solves, so let me assure you that this plan is in no way a step toward government-run health care. Instead of forcing Americans into a Washington-run health care program, Republicans have a plan to pass reforms that reduce costs and ensure personal health care decisions are made by patients, their families and their doctors. Here is how we do it.

We will reform the tax code so that all Americans can afford a quality health insurance plan and keep it. By leveling the playing field between those who don't have employer-provided health insurance and those who do, we will make health coverage more affordable and empower you to keep your own health insurance plan, even if you decide to retire early or change your job. Since World War II, the tax code has favored health insurance provided by employers. Tax incentives to purchase health insurance should apply to any individual who purchases coverage, regardless of whether they obtain coverage at their job or in the individual market.

We will make health insurance more affordable by allowing families to enroll in plans available in other states if those plans better meet their needs. Instead of setting up new bureaucracy, we will empower individuals to make the best choices for themselves and their families when it comes to purchasing health care. We'll harness the power of the marketplace to allow Americans to compare insurance policies from across the country and pick one that best meets their needs. This will provide every American with better health care choices, and reduce the number of Americans who are unable to find affordable coverage.

We will enhance Americans' control over their own health care by expanding the availability of tax-free health savings accounts so they can use their own money wisely on health care benefits they need today, save for their future health care needs, and spend more time seeking preventative care.

We will fight to reform frivolous lawsuits that are driving up costs and reducing patient access to care, and reverse the dangerous shortage of physicians in high-risk practices like obstetrics and surgery by reforming our medical liability system.

We will help small business owners afford health insurance for their employees by allowing them to purchase coverage at similar rates as large corporations and government agencies. We will do this by passing legislation to allow businesses to band together through associations and purchase quality health care for workers and their families at a lower cost.

We will require medical bills to be made more transparent and easier to understand in order to increase competition and empower individuals to know they aren't being overcharged. We will also improve health care quality in America by expanding the use of health information technology and electronic medical records.

We will provide more effective care and more choices for our seniors, improve veterans' health care through expanded choices and increase the number of low-income children with health insurance in America. We will do this in a manner that puts poor children first, instead of allowing adults and illegal aliens to misuse the program. We will promote and expand research to develop new and innovative technologies that will encourage prevention and ultimately treat and cure diseases and disorders.

House Republicans have a plan to guarantee access to affordable, high-quality, patient-centered health care for every American. We cannot afford to stall any longer on this issue, and it is my hope that Speaker Pelosi will join Republicans and work together for a more stable, more affordable health care system.